

Leicester
City Council

MEETING OF THE CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMISSION

DATE: TUESDAY, 8 APRIL 2025

TIME: 5:30 pm

PLACE: Meeting Room G.01, Ground Floor, City Hall, 115 Charles Street, Leicester, LE1 1FZ

Members of the Committee

Councillor Batool (Chair)

Councillor Bonham (Vice-Chair)

Councillors Barnes, Clarke, Gregg, Mahesh, March and Dr Moore

Members of the Committee are invited to attend the above meeting to consider the items of business listed overleaf.

For Monitoring Officer

Officer contacts:

Ed Brown (Governance Services) Edmund.brown@leicester.gov.uk and

Julie Bryant (Governance Services) Julie.bryant@leicester.gov.uk

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Further information

If you have any queries about any of the above or the business to be discussed, please contact:

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PUBLIC SESSION

AGENDA

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1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To issue a welcome to those present, and to confirm if there are any apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members are asked to declare any interests they may have in the business to be discussed.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

[Appendix A](#)

The minutes of the meeting of the Children, Young People, and Education Scrutiny Commission held on 25th February have been circulated, and Members are asked to confirm them as a correct record.

4. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair is invited to make any announcements as they see fit.

5. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS, AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

Any questions, representations and statements of case submitted in accordance with the Council's procedures will be reported.

6. PETITIONS

Any petitions received in accordance with Council procedures will be reported.

7. ADVENTURE PLAYGROUNDS UPDATE

The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education provides a verbal update

outlining the decision made and the licencing position.

8. HIGH NEEDS BLOCK - IMPACT OF WORK STREAMS [Appendix B](#)

The Director of Education and SEND submits a report to update on High Needs Block (HNB) funding for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

9. FAMILY THERAPIES SERVICE (INCLUDING Q3) [Appendix C](#)

The Director of Children's Social Work and Early Help submits a report updating on the progress of delivering Family Therapies; Multisystemic Therapy (MST), MST: Building Stronger Families (MST BSF), Functional Family Therapy for Child Welfare (FFT-CW), and Family Group Decision Making, for the period of Quarter 3.

There will be a brief update on the development of the Family Functional Therapy reunification pilot.

10. PLACEMENT SUFFICIENCY FOR CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER AND CARE LEAVERS [Appendix D](#)

The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education submits a report providing a summary of the progress made since the last placement sufficiency strategy of 2020/24, and sets out the proposed long-term priorities for 2025/30.

11. WORK PROGRAMME [Appendix E](#)

Members of the Commission will be asked to consider the work programme and make suggestions for additional items as it considers necessary.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Agenda Annex



USEFUL ACRONYMS IN RELATION TO OFSTED AND EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES (updated November 2015)

Acronym	Meaning
APS	Average Point Score: the average attainment of a group of pupils; points are assigned to levels or grades attained on tests.
ASYE	Assessed and Supported Year in Employment
C&YP	Children and Young People
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
CFST	Children and Families Support Team
CICC	Children in Care Council
CIN	Children in Need
CLA	Children Looked After
CLASS	City of Leicester Association of Special Schools
COLGA	City of Leicester Governors Association
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CQC	Care Quality Commission
CYPF	Children Young People and Families Division (Leicester City Council)
CYPP	Children and Young People's Plan
CYPS Scrutiny	Children, Young People and Schools Scrutiny Commission
DAS	Duty and Advice Service
DCS	Director of Children's Services
DSG	Dedicated Schools Grant
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EET	Education, Employment and Training
EHA	Early Help Assessment
EHCP	Education Health and Care Plan
EHP	Early Help Partnership
EHSS	Early Help Stay Safe

EIP	Education Improvement Partnership
ELG	Early Learning Goals: aspects measured at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile
EY	Early Years
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage: (0-5); assessed at age 5.
EYFSP	Early Years Foundation Stage Profile
FS	Foundation Stage: nursery and school Reception, ages 3-5; at start of Reception a child is assessed against the new national standard of 'expected' stage of development, then teacher assessment of Foundation Stage Profile areas of learning
FSM	Free School Meals
GCSE	General Certificate of Education
GLD	Good Level of Development
HNB	High Needs Block
HMCI	Her Majesty's Chief Inspector
HR	Human Resources
ICT	Information, Communication and Technology
IRO	Independent Reviewing Officer
JSNA	Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
KS1	Key Stage 1: National Curriculum Years (NCYs) 1 and 2, ages 5-7; assessed at age 7.
KS2	Key Stage 2: NCYs 3, 4, 5, and 6, ages 7-11; assessed at age 11.
KS3	Key Stage 3: NCYs 7, 8 and 9, ages 11-14; no statutory assessment.
KS4	Key Stage 4: NCYs 10 and 11, ages 14-16; assessed at age 16.
KTC	Knowledge Transfer Centre
LA	Local Authority
LADO	Local Authority Designated Officer
LARP	Leicester Access to Resources Panel
LCCIB	Leicester City Council Improvement Board
LCT	Leicester Children's Trust
LDD	Learning Difficulty or Disability
LESP	Leicester Education Strategic Partnership

LLEs	Local Leaders of Education
LP	Leicester Partnership
LPP	Leicester Primary Partnership
LPS	Leicester Partnership School
LSCB	Leicester Safeguarding Children Board
LSOAs	Lower Super Output Areas
MACFA	Multi Agency Case File Audit
NCY	National Curriculum Year
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NLEs	National Leaders of Education
NLGs	National Leaders of Governance
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PEPs	Personal Education Plans
PI	Performance Indicator
PVI	Private, Voluntary and Independent
QA	Quality Assurance
RAP	Resource Allocation Panel
RI	Requires Improvement
SA	Single Assessment
SALT	Speech and Language Therapy
SCR	Serious Case Review
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SIMS	Schools Information Management Systems
SLCN	Speech, Language and Communication Needs
SLEs	Specialist Leaders of Education
SMT	Senior Management Team
SRE	Sex and Relationship Education
TBC	To be Confirmed
TFL	Tertiary Federation Leicester
TP	Teenage Pregnancy
UHL	University Hospitals Leicester

WIT	Whatever it Takes
YOS	Youth Offending Service
YPC	Young People's Council



Leicester
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Appendix A

Minutes of the Meeting of the
CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: TUESDAY, 25 FEBRUARY 2025 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T:

Councillor Batool – Chair
Councillor Bonham -Vice-Chair

Councillor Barnes
Councillor Gregg
Councillor Dr Moore

Councillor Clarke
Councillor March

Joycelin Eze-Okubuiro – Parent Governor Representative (Primary)

In Attendance:

Assistant City Mayor Councillor Pantling
Jennifer Day – Teaching Unions Representative
Janet McKenna – UNISON Branch Secretary (Online)
Mario Duda – Youth Representative

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122. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Rae Bhatia. Cllr Orton substituted.

Cllr Gregg apologised for being absent for the previous two meetings.

123. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any interests they may have had in the business to be discussed.

Members were asked to declare any interests they may have had in the business to be discussed.

Councillor Dr Moore declared that she was Chair of the Advisory Board at Millgate School.

Councillor March declared that she was a governor at Ellesmere College.

Councillor Barnes declared that she worked in alternative education provision.

124. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

It was noted that there was an error in the minutes from 29th October 2024. Cllr Greg was erroneously noted as being the Vice-Chair when this was not the case. Cllr Bonham was the Vice-Chair, who was present at the meeting.

AGREED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission held on 14 January 2025 be confirmed as a correct record.

125. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair reminded members that the task group on the High Needs Block would begin on 3rd March and encouraged members to participate as their insights would be valued.

126. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS, AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Monitoring Officer reported that none had been received.

127. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer reported that none had been received.

128. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SEND HOME TO SCHOOL/COLLEGE TRANSPORT PROPOSED POLICIES 2025/2026 - 2027/2028

The Director of SEND and Education submitted a report setting out the approach that the Council would adopt during the 2025-2026 academic year to the provision of transport assistance to certain individuals who attend schools, colleges or certain other institutions.

The Assistant City Mayor for Children and Young People thanked everyone in attendance for their contributions. It was explained that whilst it was compulsory for all young people to remain in education, employment or training until the age of 18/19 years, there was not a statutory duty to provide Post 16

SEND School Transport. A change in legislation was recommended, to allow funding for said transport. A letter had been sent to the Secretary of State for Education and City MPs were urged to lobby on the issue.

The Chair noted that questions had been received from members of the public after the deadline for submitting questions. The Chair agreed for the questions to be received, exercising her discretion. A detailed statement from STILL SEND 16+ was taken as read and had been distributed to committee members. A response would be provided by The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education.

The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education gave an overview of the prospective Post-16 SEND Home to School Transport policy. Key points to note were as follows:

- The decision was still pending, allowing due scrutiny.
- A formal decision had been made recently to accept the budget proposals for the upcoming year.
- There was a savings target of half a million pounds for Children and Young People's services, but this paper did not include a savings proposal.
- Funds normally taken for discretionary provision, could now be utilized for statutory school age transport arrangements.
- Pressures on SEND school transport had increased with the numbers of Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs), rising National Insurance costs for transport providers, fuel costs and enhanced National Living wage.
- The budget could no longer cover discretionary travel for Post 16 SEND students.
- Efforts had been made to provide clear policy proposals, despite the complexity of legislation.

The Chair invited The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education to provide a response to the statement submitted by STILL SEND 16+ (attached). It was advised that the report covered the areas raised, but the statement could be taken for reflection when forming the final decision.

The Chair took questions submitted by the public as follows:

Question:

Given that it is recognised that the proposed changes are likely to be significantly disadvantageous for affected young people and young adults (and their families), and that all consultation responses opposed the changes, why have you failed to propose an option which makes a serious attempt to mitigate this?

The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education responded:

- The consultation responses had been analysed and the strength of feeling was recognised and was unsurprising. It was clear that there

would be young people and parents whose lives would be more complicated as a result of this change.

- There would be some young people and parents who would ultimately benefit from the autonomy of learning to travel independently although the stresses in making that transition were understood.
- It had been reflected a change had been suggested to the policy based on the feedback and within what we believe is affordable.
- It remains the case that the local authority would wish to make the discretionary provision of transport for young people with SEND to attend education but cannot afford to do so.
- A change in the law would be welcomed to make this statutory, which would also make government funding available to support such a duty on the local authority, freedom of choice and local options.

In response to a supplementary question regarding whether it was understood that the issue was about some of the most vulnerable young people in the city, it was recognised that there would be a significant impact on children and families.

Question:

In the Transport Policy, officials suggest that young people simply need to “choose” a provision in the city. Are you aware that within the council there is an education team which – under significant scrutiny and cost pressure – ensures young people are attending the nearest suitable provision and this is often in the county or even beyond?

The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education responded:

- The report laid out the considerations that need to be taken into account when making a decision.
- There was no suggestion that young people and parents must choose a provision in the city.
- The policy dealt with exceptions for placements at considerable distance where there were not transport links and where public transport and family circumstance make attendance exceptionally difficult.
- It was recognised that this means change for both young people and parents and that the provision of bespoke travel training was necessary.

Responding to a supplementary question, the Strategic Director of Social Care and Education advised that he would be happy to look at proposed policy wording regarding parents and young people being able to choose provision.

Other representations from the public:

A 60 working day appeals process is far too long when it comes to

making decisions on disabled young people's transport. Decisions that you have admitted will have a significantly disadvantageous effect for young people and their families. Can you reduce this timeframe to reduce uncertainty and anxiety for families and young people?

The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education responded:

- The two-stage review and appeals process was in line with Department for Education guidance.
- A stage one complaint would be dealt with within 20 working days.
- Only if the matter escalated to a stage two complaint would a further 40 working days be required and that would include the convening of an independent panel at a suitable time for all parties.
- Complaints would be sought to be resolved as quickly as possible.
- The process would be opened well in advance of the start of term, with sufficient time to undertake appeals. Those seeking transport assistance would always be urged to do so as early as possible.

Question:

A journey time of 75 minutes, by public transport, each way may be reasonable for a non-disabled young person over the age of 16 to travel independently, but many SEND young people need to be accompanied by an adult daily to and from education. This would entail up to 300 minutes per day providing transport. Do you consider this to be a "reasonably practicable" solution to transport in line with statutory guidance?

The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education responded:

- This was set within the policy, based on statutory guidance for younger children with SEND.
- It was recognised that this may impact on choice of placement and family life.
- Post 16 SEND school transport provision was not a statutory provision, and it was hoped that local government would make this a duty with funding to deliver it.
- Ultimately reasonableness if challenged would be decided through the Courts.

Question:

You suggest young people should remain in city provision. However, page 11 of the Post-16 transport and travel support to education and training: Statutory guidance for local authorities, states that "we would expect reasonable choice to include enabling young people to choose courses outside their home local authority boundaries if it makes sense for them to do so."

As an example of this, there are no horse care courses in the city boundary. How do you propose a SEND young adult who is travel trained and able to use public transport, but where there is no provision to their course location would be able to complete the course of study they have already embarked upon?

The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education responded:

- There was a specific exception in the policy to cover circumstances where:
 - The placement named by the local authority was a considerable distance from the young person's home;
 - the placement was not named by the Tribunal as a "parental preference"
 - There was no closer setting that can meet the young person's needs;
 - and, taking into account the availability of public transport, caring or employment responsibilities meant that the young person's parents or carers were unable to provide transport themselves.

The Chair welcomed questions from members. Responses to note were as follows:

- It was clear from the Equality and Impact assessment that challenging outcomes were expected.
- Changes to discretionary services were necessary due to budgetary constraints.
- Central government statutory policy and guidance did not tend to lend itself well to Post-16 SEND requirements.
- Officers would consider best ways to enable as many young people as possible to remain in relevant educational institutions.
- Considerations would include continued suitable education provision for young people for as long as possible.
- Other methods of support for Post 16 SEND School Transport were available, including bursaries. Healthcare needs were recognised on EHCPs and associated costs were managed by the Health department.
- Legal compliance had been ensured, but a judicial review could come.
- Supplementary finances allocated to SEND from central government were utilised within the Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs Block. There were strict terms attached to spending, which did not include provision for school transport.
- Appeals processes had been improved upon and there was a robust system in place to manage any increases in appeals following changes to policy.
- Future impact tracking information could be supplied to the Commission.
- For Looked After Children, the Council as Corporate Parent, was responsible to meet the needs of school transport assistance, inclusive of SEND school transport provision.
- Since the 2014 SEND reforms, there had been a significant rise in those requiring SEND provision. Funding received from Central Government had not kept pace with increasing demands.
- Phrasing of the report, particularly section 4.4.35, could be re-examined to ensure wording accurately reflected children's behavioural evaluations and subsequent impact on school transport assistance.
- Continuity of care was inherently problematic due to educational

placements tending to change at the age of 16. There was more sixth-form provision available within SEND schools as compared to Mainstream Schools. Where transitions occurred, considerations were in place to make changes as smooth as possible.

- Travel Training was a nationally applied initiative and data reporting could come to scrutiny.
- Costing forecasts could be re-examined, but this did not guarantee a more favourable outcome.
- School transport administration costs were minimal.
- Benchmarking had taken place against other local authorities and options such as allowing parents to buy services had been considered, but costs were prohibitive.
- Solo taxi journeys tended to incur the highest costs.
- Insights were gained from complaints and appeals.
- Complex needs were considered case by case under previous policy which did not include an 'exceptional circumstances' element.
- Ringfenced funds could not be transferred to Revenue services such as school transport provision.
- Taxi contract procurements were problematical. Personal transport budgets (PTBs) had previously been encouraged as parents could sometimes secure more reasonable, individual prices.
- Home to School Transport Policies would be published in May 2025, so the decision on Post-16 SEND School Transport would be imminent.
- Exceptional Circumstances evidence could be submitted via the electronic portal.
- Figures for young people Not In Education or Training (NEET) would likely be negatively impacted by the new proposals.
- Due to time constraints, it would not be permissible to form a scrutiny task group examining further options and costings for Post 16 Home to School Transport.

AGREED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That officers consider the wider implications of the statement from STILL SEND 16+.
- 3) That officers re-examine the suggestion that parents and Young People should choose educational institutions closer to home.
- 4) That officers consider how to enable as many young people as possible to remain in relevant educational institutions.
- 5) That reassurance be given that places are available for young people to continue education for as long as possible in the appropriate educational institution.
- 6) That the impact be tracked and reported on to scrutiny.
- 7) That wording of 4.4.35 to be considered.
- 8) That data be provided on Travel Plans and how they affect families.
- 9) That forecasts and assumptions on costs be looked at again.
- 10) That consideration be given to the need to avoid young people

becoming NEET.

- 11) That a considered response to the STILL SEND 16+ 'Option 4' be given and circulated to members of the Commission.

129. LOCAL AUTHORITY DESIGNATED OFFICERS (LADO) ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

The Head of Service for Child Safeguarding and Quality Assurance gave an overview of the report. Key points to notes were as follows:

- The purpose of the LADO role was to ensure that any allegations of harm were followed up efficiently, ensuring a safe and fair process for children and adults involved.
- Investigation outcomes were tracked annually.
- Within the reporting period, there was a decrease in unsubstantiated outcomes, which is reported positively.
- Substantiated outcomes were at 25% within this period.
- The largest reported category was Physical Harm, this was in line with previous years,
- The LADO Service regularly contributed to training and development with education services.
- The latest Ofsted inspection, recognised the positive use of the Lundy model and the emphasis on the voice of the child.
- Quality assurance feedback for the LADO Service recorded that 93% of respondents had a positive response.

The Chair welcomed questions from members. Key points to note were as follows:

- LADO did not have a responsibility with registration for private children's homes. Any questions relating to Safeguarding would fall into the LADO remit.

AGREED:

- 1) That report be noted.
- 2) That the next due report be presented at Scrutiny.

130. KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE, HELPING FAMILIES THRIVE

The Director of Children's Social Work and Early Help gave a presentation on Children's Services Reforms.

The Director of Children's Social Work and Early Help gave the presentation. Key points other than those on the slides (attached with agenda) included:

- The government had acted quickly following the General Election and an

agenda had been set out for what were likely to be substantial reforms in Children's Social Care.

- This built on work from the 2018/19 care review. The government had expanded on this and taken recommendations from the previous government on developing the Family Help service and developing substantive reforms to take on for this parliament.
- The four key principles (outlines on the slides), were child-centred and would require substantial changes to current legislation.
- Previous reports showed that the majority of children in Council care lived with family members or foster carers.
- The Schools and Children's Wellbeing Bill was aimed at supporting the key priorities in legislating to keep families together and children safe and removing barriers to opportunity.
- It was currently seen as good practice to offer Family Group Conferences or Family Network Meetings to explore what was in the family networks and communities to support the child rather than being reliant on agencies as research showed this to be more productive and effective. The government was now mandating that in situations where the child was at risk of coming into the care of the local authority, such an opportunity must be offered. A small service could coordinate this activity.
- In terms of data sharing, having a single identification number rather than separate NHS numbers and unique pupil numbers would help to link databases to allow better data and information sharing.
- Whilst education had a role in arrangement, education was not currently a statutory safeguarding partner. The guidance aimed to strengthen the role of education.
- There had been a large increase in home-educated children since the Covid-19 pandemic, this was a challenge to child protection professionals regarding assurances about children's safety. There was currently no legislation to oblige children to attend school as part of a child protection plan. The planned legislation proposes that the permission of a local authority would be needed before a parent home-educates a child.
- Corporate parenting responsibilities would be extended to schools, the judiciary and the police.
- The proposed legislation would make it mandatory that a child's social worker be supported by the virtual school.
- The legislation aimed to help care leavers to remain close to the provision that they had been supported by previously. The local authority had received pilot funding for this, and the programme had been successful. It was hoped that more funding would follow.
- In terms of legislating to tackle profiteering, there would be action and planning guidance in the legislation to make it easier to open the right kind of home. Accountability would be improved through providers with multiple delivery of places. If Ofsted deemed the care to be inadequate, this would trigger an inspection of the entire organisation.

- A more nuanced approach would be taken to children in residential care rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. For example, it was recognised that supported accommodation for 16–17-year-olds had different requirements to that for other children. It was also important that there was specialist care in residential homes for children with deprivation of liberty orders.
- It would be made easier for local authorities to run their own provision. The Department for Education (DfE) were supporting this through biannual funding bids for councils with match funding for capital funding. A bid had recently been submitted.
- In terms of regulating the market to tackle profiteering, a monopolies review was proposed, and legislation was being sought to introduce a profits cap.
- Many companies owned by hedge funds or investment funds had been leveraging debt against property. This had been seen as a failure of care groups in the adult sector and the proposed legislation aimed to prevent this happening in the children's sector.
- Under previous government regulations, any social worker could become an agency social worker. Under the proposed legislation, a social worker would need to have been directly employed by a local authority for at least three years before becoming an agency social worker.
- In terms of priority actions, a reform was proposed around developing family help provision by taking existing early help and merging it into one service with a separate stand-alone family protection resource. Workers would remain involved so that there was continuity on the child protection plan.
- The Community based approach would mirror the family help service.
- The Government wanted Local Authorities to develop multi-agency child protection schemes with partners in the police, health, mental health and drug and alcohol abuse services between now and the end of 2027. The Council were making sure they had the right resource for this and were working with the Integrated Care Board (ICB) on a shared care record.
- Work was being conducted with safeguarding partnerships and education colleagues to ensure that the educational strength of the agency.
- It was aimed to launch a social care and education social care academy to grow the workforce. This would not only include social workers, but also roles in education and adults social care such as Occupational Therapists.
- In terms of embedding value of care, work had been done with Impower to work across dimensions on the needs of young people.
- Private providers were being worked with to drive costs down.
- Future-proofing would involve making changes flexible to incorporate any future Council reform.

The Committee were invited to ask questions and make comments. Key points included:

- Providers were clear about what they wanted and were clear in their negotiations.
- In response to points made on the issue of keeping children with parents or kinship and on inclusivity and the possibility of expanding the scope to other organisations where there were diverse groups, it was explained that it was always looked to ensure that children remained with families where possible. However, where this was not possible. It was important to consider the safety of the child and take other action. Sometimes in these cases extended family was considered. In some cases where family members were overseas, the Council looked to bring them to this country for assessment, or to make arrangements for the child to be with family overseas. Outcomes were better when children were with families where safe to do so, but this was not always a possibility. If a family put someone forward for assessment, they were assessed and this was monitored by the court, and a judge would make a decision. In terms of expanding the diversity of support, the best way to do this was through extended family, although there was also a keenness to recruit foster carers. It was a challenge nationwide to find culturally matched placements for children. Sometimes children were placed with adult siblings. There was flexibility on extended family members.
- There was a regional support group from the DfE to support Local Authorities to progress.

AGREED:

- 1) That the presentation be noted.
- 2) That comments made by members of this commission to be taken into account by the lead officers.
- 3) That the Commission be updated in six months' time.
- 4) That members be kept informed on key issues.

131. OFSTED ILACS REPORT (INSPECTING LOCAL AUTHORITY CHILDREN'S SERVICES) AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education submitted a report on the most recent Leicester City Council Ofsted inspection. This took place under the "inspecting local authority children's services" (ILACS) framework in September 2024

The Assistant City Mayor for Children and Young people introduced the report and noted that lots of work had been implemented on the recommendations from Ofsted. The fact that a number of areas required improvement meant that it was necessary to look at how the Council were moving forward with the

service and supporting children and young people. The work done had been difficult and it was hoped that confidence could be gained on the way it was driven forward.

The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education presented the report. Key points included:

- The inspection had taken place six months ago, and work had been undertaken since.
- All areas for improvement from the 2021 report had been improved upon.
- It was good that social workers had manageable caseloads and knew their children well.
- Child protection plans had been reported on favourably.
- There were a number of areas for improvement:
 - In terms of management of information, there were examples of better practice elsewhere. As a result of this, benchmarking had been undertaken and a lot of data had been collected.
 - Work had been done on the timeliness and robustness of plans and contacts. The workforce was relatively young with newly qualified social workers from university. Retaining staff had also been a challenge.
 - There was need for improvement in middle-management and a need to ensure that they were confident.
 - Arrangements were sought to identify safeguarding support in care leavers, particularly around people from unregulated children's homes.
- There was support for care leavers in their 20s, including those homeless or in prison, the Council were trying to engage proactively through a rights-based approach.
- Reforms had given the Council extra income for areas of Children's Social Care.
- The city had the lowest number of children's social workers per head in the East Midlands, so more would be recruited.
- Functional Family Therapy was enabled to get investment.
- The feedback from Ofsted would be blended with information from the report into a single plan.

The Committee were invited to ask questions and make comments. Key points included:

- In terms of the recruitment rate, it was suggested that a target be identified to work on, and this should be monitored. It was clarified that an impact board existed showing the transformation of the system with reforms, there was also a dashboard of information and an improvement plan with milestone and a red/amber/green rating. It was further explained that whilst scrutiny input was welcome, movement may not be seen month-on-month. It was suggested that performance reporting

could be reflected on and brought to scrutiny.

- The headline data was not reflective of the report. Some of this reflected cultural change. Since 2021, it was thought that the culture may not have improved over time as maintaining the culture across the workforce could be difficult. It was necessary to look at the culture in middle management and around positivity. Policy type changes would also need to be examined.
- In terms of data, the department were data-rich, but it was necessary to think about how this data was used.
- In terms of unregulated placements, there were around six or seven children that could not be accommodated due to extreme behaviour, this was often due to the risk of Ofsted registration. As a result of this they went into unregulated accommodation. However, the rate of this was low compared to other authorities. The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education took liability for these children, and so it was ensured that these children were as well looked after as they could be in terms of oversight. More regular contact with these children was made so that the Council did not have to rely on the providers.
- It was suggested that there was a lot to be gained in terms of positives, but criticism must be taken on board.
- It was suggested that leadership and management set the culture, and as such these staff members needed to be retained.
- It needed to be acknowledged that the leadership team were relatively new, but there was a lot of ambition and drive. The Council building its own children's homes meant that looked after children were no longer a commodity. Having longer-term plans showed the vision and ambition.
- The issue of whether there was anyone or any body to judge Ofsted quality assurance was raised.
- It was good that self-evaluation had started as changes could not be made without self-evaluation.
- In response to a question about costs, there would be no knock-on effect as there was £2.6m in the prevention grant. This would enable the Council to carry out its intended plans in terms of restructuring and external support. This was a one-year deal, but it was hoped that funding would continue. There was also work that could be done in the voluntary sector.
- In response to a question regarding return-home interviews, it was acknowledged that there was a need to be more consistent with the offer. However, it was explained that they had been offered in 91% of cases. Whilst there was more to do to make it 100%, a wide range of ways to engage were used. Young people in these situations could not be forced to engage. It was important to ensure that the best person was used to have these conversations with the young people involved. There was monthly data on return home, and this was monitored by the team and was not disproportionate to other authorities. However, work could be done on achieving more and getting young people to talk about their experience, however, some were unwilling to talk and as such it

was necessary to develop trusting relationships with adults.

- A new system to manage information had been invested in. A new education management system had been procured and the department were in the process of moving over to it. This would improve the ability to analyse data.
- It was requested that training around middle-management skills sets be considered in future updates. It was further clarified that part of the funding received was allocated to training. Additionally, there was support from the DfE to link up with improvement partners, and the Council would link with a London Borough that had experience on this.
- There would be new recruitment as part of the problem had been that senior management had been stretched. The number of new staff had not been totalled as managers were being negotiated with to see what roles were needed. It was thought that there would likely be around ten specialist workers on social work, and new service heads and managers. The process of job evaluation and advertising would be long but was being pursued as quickly as possible.

AGREED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That comments made by members of this commission to be taken into account by the lead officers.
- 3) That regular updates to be brought to scrutiny, to include target monitoring and performance as well as training (especially of middle-management).

132. WORK PROGRAMME

Members of the Commission were invited to consider content of the work programme and were invited to make suggestions for additions as appropriate to be brought to future meetings.

Improvement Plan Updates would be added to the forward plan.

The work programme was noted.

133. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There being no further items of urgent business, the meeting finished at 8:20pm.

Minute Item 128

Statement from STILL SEND 16+ (Post-16 SEND Transport):

In good faith, we have engaged with Leicester City Council since a legal challenge in 2024 forced a reconsideration of transport policy. In the SEND Transport Policy Proposed Decision Report you can read a summary of our responses (and the responses of others) to the recent consultation. However, the three options which have been put forward for your consideration do not reflect the concerns which we have repeatedly raised to council officials, and which have been raised again in the consultation.

This perspective is reflected in section 1.8 of the SEND Transport Policy Proposed Decision Report v0.12, which states “It is recognised that the proposed changes are likely to be significantly disadvantageous for affected young people and young adults (and their families), and it is estimated that approximately 350 (and potentially up to 450) young people and young adults with SEND (and their families) are likely to be affected. The likely disadvantageous consequences of the proposed changes were reflected in the responses to the consultation on the proposed new SEND Travel Policy and Post-16 Statement, all of which opposed the changes”.

We recognise that **Option 1- Do Nothing** is not a viable option in the current financial climate.

We cannot accept **Option 2- Adopt the draft policy** as this will be “significantly disadvantageous” as noted above. We argue that the second option is open to legal challenge as it does not “have regard to the needs of those for whom it would not be reasonably practicable to access education or training provision if no arrangements were made”(1). These needs are clearly set out in the consultation responses, where 29% of adult respondents stated that their child would not be able to continue in education and training if the proposed policy is adopted. For example, the suggested acceptable journey time of 75 minutes is intended as guidance for **all** young people aged over 16 and does not take into consideration how SEND will impact this. In many cases of young people with SEND, the parent will need to accompany them, making work impossible.

The suggestion that young people with EHCPs should simply “choose” a provision closer to home does not reflect the reality of specialist placements. For example, Leicester does not have any autism-specific provision in the city. We all would like our children to attend a placement in the city, but if the needs cannot be met here (or there are no spaces) then they must travel elsewhere. This is not a parental decision, but a decision made under significant scrutiny by the education team. Note that statutory guidance also states that “we would expect reasonable choice to include enabling young people to choose courses outside their home local authority boundaries if it makes sense for them to do so.”(2)

We also note that although the local authority is claiming that parents are responsible for school transport, the statutory guidance states that “the statutory responsibility for transport for 16-19 year olds (who have started a course before their 19th birthday) rests with local authorities.” There is also a legal duty to provide transport for adults with an EHCP plan.(3) Under this option, the council proposes to support just 16 children with a Personal Transport Budget, leaving everyone else with no support.

Option 3 offers a solitary concession for which the basis is unclear. The proposed draft policy states that siblings must have an EHCP, yet the decision report refers to “siblings with SEND”. These are two different categories – there are many children with SEND who do not have EHCPs. Additionally, the decision report states on a footnote on page 22 that “it is assumed that 50% of the total post 16 cohort who currently receive SEND transport ..are multiple siblings with SEND attending different schools that may be eligible under option 3”. Given that only 15% of consultation respondents reported that they have other children that will be affected, and no data was gathered on whether these siblings have SEND and/or EHCPs, it is difficult to see any basis for this calculation. ***Option 3 is inadequate in all respects as a response to the significant concerns raised by the consultation.***

We propose an **Option 4**. This option takes into account the concerns raised in the consultation and broadens the exceptional circumstances to ensure all applications are considered individually based on the needs already specified in the EHCP (rather than the council’s own definition of “complex SEND”) and how these impact transport alongside family circumstances. Although the provision of a Personal Transport Budget would remain the first line of support, alternatives should be made available where needed. These could include the use of Personal Assistants to accompany young people on public transport, the provision of a taxi or minibus. This option would reduce the spend on taxis while still ensuring the needs of disabled young people are met. Leicestershire County Council currently takes this approach.

Finally, we have noted that the timescale for appeals is significant – 20 working days for a first appeal and 40 working days for a second appeal. This is unacceptably long where matters concerning disabled young people’s support is concerned.

We would like to ask you to carefully scrutinise the documentation and recommendations regarding this policy and propose an Option 4 at the upcoming meeting of the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Committee.

The consequences of the proposed policy are immediate and severe for disabled young people and their families, and this decision now rests in your hands.

If you would like to discuss this further, members of our group are available.

STILL SEND 16+

Save Transport in Leicester and Leicestershire SEND 16+

(1) Post-16 transport and travel support to education and training: Statutory guidance for local authorities, page 10 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-16-transport-to-education-and-training#full-publication-update-history>

(2) Post-16 transport and travel support to education and training: Statutory guidance for local authorities, page 11 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-16-transport-to-education-and-training#full-publication-update-history>

(3) Post-16 transport and travel support to education and training: Statutory guidance for local authorities, page 6 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-16-transport-to-education-and-training#full-publication-update-history>

High Needs Block (HNB) Impact of workstreams

Children and Young People's Scrutiny Commission

Decision to be taken by: Cllr Elaine Pantling
Assistant City Mayor for Education

Decision to be taken on/Date of meeting: 8th April 2025

Lead director: Sophie Maltby
Director of Education and SEND

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected:
- Report author: Shelley Piercy
- Author contact details: shelley.piercy@leicester.gov.uk
- Report version number: 1

1. Summary

- 1.1 Funding for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities is provided from the High Needs Block (HNB) of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). At the end of 2023/24, Leicester City had a deficit budget in this area totalling £9.648m. There is a statutory override in place until April 2026 which allows the authority to exclude this deficit from the main revenue budgets.
- 1.2 This continues to be the picture across the country with high numbers of councils being in deficit within their HNF Block.
- 1.3 The Department for Education (DfE) requires Leicester City to submit their own plan of action to address the issues. This is the High Needs Management Recovery plan. (NB: Other authorities have been forced into government led initiatives to address their deficits such as the Safety Valve Programme and Delivering Better Value programme.)
- 1.4 The Transformation plan identifies aims and objectives of how the Local authority with partners will address the increasing deficit.
- 1.5 In Sept/Oct 2024 the High Needs Management Recovery plan and Transformation Plan were presented to political members to share with leaders the HNB status and aims to address the increasing deficit.
- 1.6 Despite the challenges of addressing the deficit in the HNFB, Leicester City strives to provide effective, efficient, inclusive resources to support and meet its statutory duties in meeting the needs of a rising number of children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND).

2. Recommended actions/decision

Review the progress of the Transformation plan aims

- Aim 1: New DfE Reforms – The SEND and AP Change Programme
- Aim 2: Developing Ordinarily Available offer: LA, Schools, Settings & Colleges
- Aim 3: Local Authority Process reforms & Sufficiency
- Aim 4: Increase confidence for parents and carers
- Aim 5: Placement reforms
- Aim 6: Stakeholder Engagement

3. Scrutiny / stakeholder engagement

- 3.1 A DSG Management Recovery Plan has been required by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). They have received and scrutinised the plan and agreed to its content. An update meeting will be held in May 2025.

4. Background and options with supporting evidence

Providing support to our CYP with SEND in Leicester
Leicester City remains committed to supporting CYP with SEND and has evaluated the SEND system at a local level in order to continue to be effective in providing this support.

4.1 Aim 1 – The Change Programme

The national Change Programme Partnership is a government led initiative that stems from the SEND Inquiry 2019 and has established a test and learn programme across a series of SEND reforms. Leicester City continues to be a part of this National Agenda to be at the forefront of change and new initiatives. The Change Programme has been extended by the new administration until March 26. Leicester City continues to be a part of that test and learn which is supporting our own development of SEND reforms at a Local Level. The work completed in the Change Programme has added to and supported the development of transformation project.

4.2 Transformation plan impact Sept 2024 – March 2025:

Aim 2 – Developing the Ordinarily Available offer & Aim 3 Local Processes and Sufficiency

4.2.1 The table below demonstrates the impact of the above workstreams in supporting the number of CYP entering the higher level aspect of the SEND system through the Education Health and Care Needs Assessment pathway (EHCNA). Leicester City endeavours to ensure the right support, in the right place at the right time. By giving careful consideration to those entering the EHCP pathway of support, this ensures there is sufficiency of resource to support those CYP with the most complex needs and in time will support the sufficiency of special school places.

4.2.2 The number of referrals for EHCNA has slowed as the local authority settings and schools have worked together to develop their Ordinarily Available offer for pupils with SEND needs to be supported in the mainstream. The schools offer is supported at a Local authority level by our SEND Support Services and short term non statutory funding. SENDSS Support services and SES have worked to evaluate and improve their systems and processes to ensure decision making across the SEND division is consistent, fair and equitable.

	Last year (Academic year 23/24)	This year Academic year 24/25 to 12/03/25)
Number of referrals for EHC requests received	922	455
Number of referrals accepted for assessment (EHCNA)*	595	230
Number of plans agreed	605	317
Number of parent requests	345	186
Parental requests as a % of total received	37.4%	40.8%

This is the total EHCP's started in the year from the EHCP completion data report

4.2.3 New guidance has been written for Teachers and SENDCos who provide information and advice for the EHCNA. It is anticipated that this will have further impact on

the consistency, quality of the EHCP, ensuring that the Code of practice is adhered to and EHCPs are issued when necessary.

4.2.4 Banding Descriptors have been written to support schools and advice givers in providing consistent approaches to the identification of SEND and provide guidance in the level of provision the CYP needs. This ensures equity and parity across the City.

4.2.5 A high area of spend within in the HNF Block is placements in Independent non-maintained special schools and Independent specialist providers.

Through a series of process reforms the and the introduction of a new panel for decision making, there are now more robust measures in place, and more scrutiny for placing students outside of the authority.

4.2.6 There is a significant rise in pupils with Emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA) and a new pathway of support has been devised and approved to support these CYP.

4.3 Aim 4 Increase Parent Carer Confidence

4.3.1 Parent Carer Confidence in the SEND System continues to be a significant challenge across the country. In Leicester City 40% of applications for EHCNA are from parent/carers. The Local offer website is undergoing improvements to communicate our SEND offer more accessibly to parents. The Local offer Live event also provided an opportunity for Leicester City to demonstrate the high quality SEND offer.

4.3.2 Way forward Meetings with parents who are experiencing difficulties navigating the SEND system have been piloted and these have had positive outcomes.

4.3.3 Person Centred Reviews have been re-launched by SEND Support Services which put children and families are the centre of the annual review meeting and foster positive working relationships between parents and families.

4.4 Aim 5 Placement reforms and Sufficiency

4.4.1 Leicester City like many authorities continues to experience difficulty with sufficiency of special school places. A recent separate paper has been submitted to capture the issues around sufficiency and how Leicester City aims to support the CYP whilst these issues are being addressed.

4.4.2 The Designated Specialist Provision continues to develop in Leicester City with phase 2 coming to an end with two new Secondary DSPs opening in September 2025. A 20 place DSP aims to open at the City of Leicester College and a second 20 place provision at The Lancaster Academy. These two provisions will provide support for learners with Communication and Interaction needs.

4.5 – Stakeholder Engagement

4.5.1 High Needs Management Recovery plan and Transformation project has been presented to all Local Authority Services, Secondary Head Teachers, Primary Head Teachers, Sendcos, and School Business Managers. It has also been presented to Schools Forum (unions) and the Governor network. The SEND and AP Board meets monthly with colleagues from Health.

4.5.2 An update will be provided to the DFE in May 2025.

4.6 Risks and issues

4.6.1 The funding provided by central government remains inadequate despite increases in allocation to the HNF block. In 2025/26 Leicester City received an additional £6.420m (+6.87%) to its HNF block but this remains insufficient to support the level of demand. Whilst demand for Education Health Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA) is reducing and the number of EHCPs issued is reducing there is still a significant number of children in the system overall.

4.6.2. Parent carer requests for assessment is a high proportion of the number of requests we receive

4.6.3 The in-year deficit is still increasing because **demand** for high-cost placements is increasing

4.6.4 The **costs** of high-cost placements is increasing

4.6.5 The number of pupils requiring support in Post 16 is at its highest rate.

4.6.6 Time is required to truly demonstrate impact of the transformation plan.

4.6.7 Forecasting shows the in-year deficit will be higher for 2024/25 at 16.675m. The in-year deficit in 2025/26 due to increasing pupil numbers and cost inflation is forecast to be £23.715m. This gives a forecast cumulative deficit of over £50m by the end of 2025/26.

5. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

5.1 Finance

Whilst the report outlines the work being done by the High Needs Block Recovery Plan and the SEND Transformation project, the number of children with SEND is expected to continue to grow.

The cumulative deficit brought forward at the end of 2023/24 is £9.648m. Forecasting shows the in-year deficit will be higher for 2024/25 at 16.675m. The in-year deficit in 2025/26 due to increasing pupil numbers and cost inflation is forecast to be £23.715m. This gives a forecast cumulative deficit of over £50m by the end of 2025/26.

The Government has allowed local authorities to exclude DSG deficits from their main revenue budgets as part of a statutory override, due to expire in March 2026.

Signed: Mohammed Irfan, Head of Finance

Dated: 24 March 2025

5.2 Legal implications

There are no direct legal implications arising out of the recommendation in the report.

Signed: Julia Slipper (Education & Employment) [Tel: ext 6855](tel:01162556855)

Dated: 28 March 2025

5.3 Equalities implications

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which means that, in carrying out their functions, they have a statutory duty to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

High needs funding supports provision for pupils and students with SEND who require additional resources to participate in education and learning and to ensure equality and equity of opportunity for all children and young people irrespective of their need. The number of children with SEND is expected to continue to grow. The report outlines the work being done by the High Needs Block Recovery Plan and the SEND Transformation project, Children with SEND and their families are also often reliant on support from other public services, in particular health and social care. Initiatives that improve in meeting the needs of a rising number of children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) should lead to positive impacts. The most relevant protected characteristics being age and disability. Local authorities must ensure that children and young people and their parents/carers are involved in discussions and decisions about their individual support and local provision, in line with their statutory duties. Similarly, local authorities must ensure any changes to SEND provision and high needs funding arrangements are made in close consultation and co-production with the schools and colleges which will be affected. Any engagement must be fair and accessible.

Signed: Equalities Officer, Surinder Singh, Ext 37 4148

Dated: 27 March 2025

5.4 Climate implications

Transport generates around a third of Leicester's carbon emissions, so wherever pupils' needs can be met locally, this helps minimise the emissions. The approach outlined in the report, which includes seeking to provide appropriate support in mainstream school settings, should help to reduce emissions from journeys to school by reducing journeys to special schools which, on average, will tend to be further away.

Signed: Duncan Bell, Change Manager (Climate Emergency). Ext. 37 2249

Dated: 26th March 2025

6. Background information and other papers:



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7. Summary of appendices:

8. Is this a private report (If so, please indicate the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?

9. Is this a “key decision”? If so, why?



Family Therapies Service (including Q3)

Family Therapies: CYPE Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 08/04/2025

Lead director/officer: Damian Elcock

Head of Service: Karen Manville

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
- Report author: Tiernan Welch and Karen Manville
- Author contact details: tiernan.welch@leicester.gov.uk
karen.manville@leicester.gov.uk
- Report version number: V4

1. Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide a progress on the delivery of Family Therapies; Multisystemic Therapy (MST), MST: Building Stronger Families (MST BSF), Functional Family Therapy for Child Welfare (FFT-CW), and Family Group Decision Making, for the period of Quarter 3.
- 1.2 To briefly update on the development of the Family Functional Therapy reunification pilot.

2 Recommendation(s) to scrutiny:

- 2.1 To note the content of the report and the significant impact all the programmes are having on keeping children at home, where safe to do so.
- 2.2 To note that the Edge of Care Strategy will be launched over the coming months.
- 2.3 To note that the FFT reunification pilot will conclude shortly, and a report is being prepared for submission on impact and outcomes and further opportunities to sustain the offer.
- 2.4 To note the need to recruit to the vacant Family Decision Making posts.
- 2.5 To request that an annual report is presented through to Scrutiny.

3. Detailed report

3.1 Within Leicester City there are now five teams within the Family Therapies service area which work intensively with children at very high risk of entering care, (MST, MST-BSF, FDC and FFT). The teams were set up under the invest to save model, which is a coherent, planned approach to investing in the development of appropriate interventions to divert children from coming into placements to ensure that unnecessary expenditure is avoided and that available resources are used most efficiently for the long-term benefit of children, young people and their families.

3.2 Apart from the undoubted benefits for children, the main benefit for the strategy is the comparison to alternative future cost scenarios. In the previous financial year, the teams successfully diverted 199 from entering the care system. We have calculated that the gross costs avoided from this is £7.5m which was well above our target of £3.083m. Without this investment, Leicester would be faced with significant additional expenditure on placements for looked after children in this year alone – as well as searching to place nearly 200 more children into already scarce looked after provisions.

3.3 **MST** delivers a range of therapies aimed at young people aged 11-17yrs where there is a risk of care because of criminal and / or sexual exploitation, offending, substance misuse, missing, aggression, anti-social behaviours, problems at school etc.

3.4 MST BSF delivers a range of therapies aimed at children aged 6-17yrs who are subject to physical abuse or neglect. MST BSF has two p/t Psychiatrist positions attached to the teams.

3.5 FFT- CW delivers family therapy where there are children from pre-birth to 17 with any child welfare concern (except active sexual abuse).

3.6 FDM – Family Decision Making (Formerly Family Group Conference) is a process led by family members to plan and make decisions for a child who is identified as being at risk.

3.7 Locally, BSF (previously MST BSF) and FFT-CW provide support for families identified from Legal Planning Meetings (LPMs), Edge of Care panels or directly from Court proceedings. MST BSF take referrals for families from outside of legal proceedings, and like MST use an assessment based on the probability of coming into care.

3.8 MST works with adolescents in crisis, targeting those deemed at the highest risk of care. This is typically when other services have tried to offer an earlier intervention and where care proceedings or a Section 20 placement are being given careful consideration. These children are usually known to multiple services (Social Care, Children and Young Peoples Justice Service, SEND etc). At the point of referral to MST, an assessment must be made as to the probability that the young person would have gone into care with no intervention. This probability measure, also known as the targeting deflator, measures the extent to which financial savings will be deflated because of not being able to target interventions with 100% accuracy, to those children that would have gone into care. This compares with MST BSF and FFT-CW where referrals are made in general, when legal proceedings to take the child into care would otherwise commence, hence the probability of care is near certain.

3.9 Since July 2024, Family Therapies has become home to FGC which is appropriate and will hopefully enable it to grow and stabilise. The aim of the FGC is recognition that often a child's best, most loving and consistent support comes from within their own family. We recognise that families can be transitory, they may not have spoken in some time or may have had disagreements and fall outs, but that when it comes for the best interests of the child, most families will put aside these differences. FGC is now known as Family Decision Making (FDM)

3.10 Combined Impact

3.1 In this quarter 3, across all teams, there have been 29 families and 45 children commencing treatment. The teams have worked with 93 families and 183 children in the quarter; this includes families commencing engagement in earlier quarters who are still in treatment. 29 families and 64 children have closed in the quarter.

3.12 Each child is allocated a projected placement (avoided) based on several factors: the risks the child/ren poses or are posed, their behaviours and needs, and placement availability on the day the child/ren is referred. This data is frequently cross checked with social workers and the placement team for accuracy. The average annual placement cost avoided is £81k.

3.13 The average time between referral and treatment starting for this quarter was 13 days, which is above target of <10. The 13 days average between referral and start includes a 'sign up and consent' visit before treatment start, so families are contacted and meet the team at least once between referral and start.

3.14 Business support complete Therapist Adherence (TAM) questionnaires' with all clients whereby families are asked to effectively score their progress and relationship with their allocated therapist. In the period, 130 TAM-R interviews have been conducted in quarter. The average adherence score (client satisfaction) across the therapists is .84 in quarter. This is above target (.61).

3.15 Crucially the TAM-R collection rate demonstrates that 95% of all families open have been interviewed in this quarter.

3.16 In respect of auditing and quality assurance (QA) activity. There were 15 direct observations of practice. In addition, 76 cases had additional 'deep dive' analysis exploring practice successes and difficulties, these have taken place outside of the usual QA activity as part of monthly QA completely by managed to ensure consistency in practice across teams.

3.17 Finally, the teams completed 5 audits against the OFSTED framework, with 4 scoring good and 1 scoring RI. This is a tested and robust process, with every case file being independently moderated by a different manager before concluding on a grade. All QAs are graded before and after the 'loop is closed' with actions for completion checked and signed off as achieved before the QA is completed. A moderation process is in place and the Head of Service completes an additional moderation and views all inadequate and RI audits.

3.18 All children and parents are encouraged to provide input into what they want from the treatment from the outset. This is then reviewed as treatment progresses. The treatments specifically target the desired outcomes of the child, parents, wider family, and professionals working with the family. Some examples of children's goals are listed below:

Children's views:

- We just want to be a proper family.
- I want to have all my stuff at mums and for that to be my home. I don't mind packing a bag to go and visit my aunt but don't want to have to do that again to see mum.
- We're just pleased that finally we are being listened to, we both wanted to live 50/50 between mum and dad and eventually it's sorted.
- For mum to be less sad.
- I want to be listened to.
- To keep myself safe when I am out and not speak to people that are asking me for sexual images.
- To not have sex with current boyfriend who is 16.
- I would like to find a course I really like to do; the options aren't clear to me at the moment so I don't know what I can do.
- I want to be in school full time like all the other children.
- I want the shouting to stop between mummy and daddy and I want to see mummy and daddy equally.
- I feel really stressed about being stuck in the middle- I want Mum and Dad to sort it out away from us.
- I want to have a garden so I can have a trampoline to jump really high on.
- R to be nicer – he says things and doesn't wait for me to do it. – Give me a bit of time. (Mum will ask J to pick his coat up, and then R will not give J a chance to do it on his own accord, he will quickly follow up on mum's request).
- Play more football & FIFA stuff together.
- Give space to each other.
- I want the arguing and shouting to stop.
- I want K to stop annoying me.
- I want to go back Winstanley – mainstream school.

3 Parent and Carer views:

- F to attend school every day and not be unhappy.

- F to receive the right level of support by school who understand her needs rather than button pushing her.
- School to respect F and work towards her returning to main provision site.
- For people not to tell me how to raise my kids.
- I want some stability for T around staying out. He has been doing what he wants when he wants and he needs some boundaries around this.
- Our relationship has broken down. I want this to be better but I do not know how this will look. I just want to be able to talk to T and for him not to talk to me the way he does.
- To get on better with mum.
- To feel happy.
- I would like to work on my anger so I can walk away from arguments.
- I would like me and Mum to be able to take responsibility for not hearing / listening to what the children want from us.

3.19 In the quarter, 86% of children in treatment have concluded treatment and remained safely at home. Counting only families (n=29) closed in the quarter 39% (n=11) have closed to the department entirely, 17% (n=5) stepped down to a lower plan, 24% (n=7) stayed on the same plan, 3% (n=1) have stepped up and 17% (n=5) became CLA.

3.20 Sustainability is an ongoing area of focus for the teams. All cases opened to the teams are tracked for 18 months after closure to monitor their CLA status. Families are tracked in quarterly and annual cohorts:

- Families closing in the same quarter, 18 months ago: 92% remain at home.
- Families closing in the same quarter, 12 months ago: 84% remain at home.
- Families closing in the same quarter, 6 months ago: 85% remain at home.
- Families closing in this quarter: 86% remain at home.

3.21 Since the start of the financial year, the teams are at 70% target of the target for children diverted from care which is on track. The number of children diverted from care however is 262 which is 56% of the annual target which is just below target for the period which should be closer to 75%. Looking at teams, MST BSF (previously MST BSF) which is fully staffed are on target with 77% but the number over all is reduced by MST and FFT allocations whom have had some staffing difficulties impacting on target rates being achieved to date.

3.22 MST are functioning with staffing of only 50% capacity owing to people leaving post and delays in recruitment. FFT's targets are also lower than expected at 52%, however this can be explained as the pilot for reunification has resulted in a much higher investment of time and resource than usual on 'edge of care' cases. All teams are working at capacity and the trajectory is that the case load target can be met by the end of the financial year. This will be closely monitored.

3.23 It is pleasing to note however that across the team's savings are currently forecast at 194% above target of £3.083m, equalling £6.044m in expected savings which is set to continue across quarter 4.

3.24 All teams have clear action plans to meet expected targets, and set back are understood well as smaller caseloads enable us to complete analysis. Ultimately, the complexity of case work has meant that treatment times with several families has had to be extended beyond typical treatment time for reason including the late identification of trauma and the need for on-going treatment, requests for extensions both from CiN and the Courts and as detailed above the additional challenges associated with FFT reunification.

3.25 The FFT reunification pilot is now running, commencing in October 2024. Ultimately the project is proving to be highly successful and at the time of writing 83% of the children signed up have returned home safely. We know from detailed NSPCC research that previous projects in other authorities have struggled to sustain reunification and flagged risks of causing further harm. However, it is the additional and on-going support from FFT which enables emerging problems to be responded to therapeutically which is believed to be making the difference. Though there are areas to resolve prior to the pilot ending, and the project is hopefully agreed as a sustainable approach, we are deeply proud of the impact as 8 children were identified to be offered the FFT programme as part of the initial pilot programme. Several factors were taken into consideration in selecting these children, including being at risk of placement breakdown and readiness for leaving care. 5 of the children were overseen by the LAC teams and 3 by the CIN teams. Unfortunately, updated assessments made 2 children no longer suitable. Alternative cases were identified, resulting in 6 active referrals all actively engaging and working with FFT, with a seventh being added in January 2025.

3.26 At the time of writing, 5 of the 6 initial cohort where work commenced in October (83%) are home, resulting in significant cost savings for the local authority while also freeing up 4 beds in local authority children's homes. The total annual savings, due to the reduction in high-cost care placements, would over a year would exceed **£1,351,480**. This demonstrates the potential for both financial efficiency and positive outcomes for children, offering a model for further investment in reunification programmes as well as contribute towards savings in other areas.

YP Name	LL ID	LAC Entry Date	Annual placement costs
RL	596837	12/02/2021	£207,480
SL	567585	03/02/2022	£286,000
CL	855090	25/11/2021	£286,000
TA	858877	01/01/2022	£286,000
RD	546233	25/04/2018	£286,000
KH	709229	23/06/2022	£207,480

3.27 Adding 2 therapists to the team will increase capacity for further work to take place supporting reunification, while continuing to meet FFT-CW's core offer of working to avoid children coming into care. In consideration, therapists would have a waiting of Edge of Care cases as well as reunification cases, in recognition of the significant additional work that is required.

3.28 Should the project be approved, we aim to quickly recruit additional staff within the team to further increase the reunification offer, providing greater resilience within the team and improved outcomes. This will be covered in more depth in a detailed report when the pilot is near completion.

3.29 Family Therapies are now live on Liquid Logic, enabling seamless and transparent referrals from social care, CYJPS and Early Help to access services. This measure, while primarily born of need will also address the long overdue issue of delays in sign up as referrals and Family Therapies managers can better track progress as well as potential barriers. Should these arise (such as issues with consent), the issue will be visible and hopefully address any frustrations.

3.30 Family Therapies is now home for Family Decision Making (previously known as FGC) and there are imminent plans to recruit to vacant posts to address the long-standing need in the area. To meet stakeholder expectations, and its now anticipated growth to offer an FGC to every family under PLO as well as existing referrals, there is a business case being written for 2 additional FTE posts as well as 1 FTE supervisor post.

3.31 The Edge of Care strategy has now been completed and presented to our Lead Member, detailing the progress made by the service as well as plans for development, including the better utilisation of services. The strategy is scheduled to be presented at the Executive and will be launched through a range of boards and published on the LCC website in due course.

4. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

4.1 Financial Implications

This is an update report setting out the work of Family Therapy Service. The avoidance of gross costs has been calculated within the service using data from Liquid Logic. This is to illustrate the level of additional budget that would have been required without the interventions outlined in this report.

Funding will have to be identified by senior managers for the additional posts referred to in this report in paragraph 3.30 before they can be recruited to.

Signed: Mohammed Irfan, Head of Finance

Dated: 28 March 2025

4.2 Legal Implications

The Children Act s17(1)(b) places a duty upon local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and, so far as is consistent with that duty, to promote the upbringing of such children by their families by providing a range and level of services appropriate to those children's needs. The Family Services Therapy is a key provision in this regard.

Signed: *Susan Holmes*

Dated: 27th March 2025

4.3 Equalities Implications

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which means that, in carrying out their functions, they have a statutory duty to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

The aim of these programmes is to provide a targeted response to those children at very high risk of entering care with a view to reducing care placements, the financial cost of these and improving outcomes for children, young people and their families.

However, the report does not explore in any detail the protected characteristics of those children at very high risk of entering care, any potential issues in terms of over representation and how this compares to local demographics and the national picture or any work being done locally to address any specific issues related to this. To make further progress in meeting our public-sector equality

duties, in particular that we are advancing equality of opportunity and eliminating discrimination, the service should ensure that the monitoring of disproportionality, trends and issues include the protected characteristics of children at very high risk of entering care not least sex, race, disability, religion and belief.

Signed: Sukhi Biring, Equalities Officer

Dated: 27th March 2025

4.4 Climate Emergency Implications

There are no climate emergency implications arising directly from this report. However, by reducing the need for children and young people to be placed into care, the services discussed in the report will be reducing the need for additional accommodation, with the associated extra carbon emissions caused by providing heating, hot water and power for that accommodation.

Signed: Duncan Bell, Change Manager (Climate Emergency). Ext. 37 2249

Dated: 27th March 2025

5. Background information and other papers:

N/A

6. Summary of appendices:

A-Glossary of terms

Appendix A:

Glossary of terms:

The teams within the Family Therapies area are: Multisystemic Therapy (MST), MST: Building Stronger Families (MST BSF), Functional Family Therapy for Child Welfare (FFT-CW), and Family Group Decision Making (FDM)

- CAMHS: Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services
- CIN: Refers to Child in Need, or within context the service social care provides to support children who are experiencing safeguarding concerns
- CLA: Child Looked after. A child whose parental responsibility is shared with the local authority
- CYJPS: Children's and Young Peoples Justice Service. The local authority's diversionary and statutory offer to support children at risk of, or involved in offending
- Edge of Care: Children who live in homes where risk is escalated and have been assessed as at risk of needing placement
- Liquid Logic: The shared social care database used to store data and assessments on children
- LL ID: This is the reference number used by social care services to identify children on a case recording system
- Q3 refers to the third financial quarter of the year (October-December).
- Therapist Adherence (TAM): This is a score provided by family members based on therapist performance



Placement Sufficiency for Children Looked After and Care Leavers

Children, Young People and Education
Scrutiny Commission

Date of meeting: 08 April 2025

Lead director: Laurence Jones

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All.
- Report author: David Thrussell / Mike Evans
- Author contact details: 454 1657
- Report version number: Final

1. Summary

- 1.1. The council has a legal duty to ensure that there is sufficient accommodation for children looked after and care leavers that meets their needs, and as far as is reasonably practical is within the local authority area.
- 1.2 The report provides a summary of the progress made since our last placement sufficiency strategy from 2020/24 and sets out our proposed long-term priorities for 2025/30.

2. Recommendation(s) to scrutiny:

- 2.1 To note the progress made delivering the Placement Sufficiency strategy from 2020/24 and agree the proposed strategic priorities for 2025/30.
- 2.2 To provide an annual update to CYPE Scrutiny on the progress made against the strategic priorities and any changes to the operational context that might impact on the delivery of the priorities.

3. Detailed report

- 3.1 The council has a legal duty under Section 22G of the Children Act 1989 to ensure that there is sufficient accommodation for children looked after that meets their needs, and that as far as is reasonably practicable is within the local authority area.
- 3.2 In order to meets its statutory duties the council has a Placement Sufficiency Strategy that sets out our strategic goals over a five-year cycle which expires in 2024/5. It is proposed to adopt a further five-year strategy for the period 2025/30 and for progress to be reviewed and reported annually.
- 3.3 Our placement sufficiency priorities for 2025/30 are:
 - 3.3.1 To invest and strengthen our edge of care offer to support children to continue living at home or be reunified with their families when it is safe to do so.

- 3.3.2 To support stability for our children and young people, by providing timely options to achieve permanence in a safe and loving home with additional support to meet their individual needs.
- 3.3.3 To increase our recruitment and retention of mainstream and specialist foster carers to support their capacity to meet the needs of the children they care for and enable more children and young people to live locally.
- 3.3.4 To review and to reduce our use of out of area children's residential homes and independent fostering agencies, and to increase our inhouse children's residential home provision.
- 3.3.5 To commission smarter to reduce costs, assure quality and support better matching, through building relationships with our market providers and establishing stronger commissioning practices.
- 3.3.6 To expand our provision of high quality semi-independent and independent accommodation, working with both the voluntary and private sectors as we seek to commission new accommodation and support.

3.4 Placement Sufficiency Strategic Aims – What We Will Do

3.4.1 To invest and strengthen our edge of care offer to support children to continue living or be reunified with their families when it is safe to do so.

- To expand our Functional Family Therapy pilot to identify and support reunification of children with their families where appropriate to do so.
- Explore opportunities for reinvesting 18+ accommodation money in improved mental health support and youth work to reduce placement breakdown.

3.4.2 To support stability for our children and young people, by providing timely options to achieve permanence in a safe and loving home with additional support to meet their individual needs.

- Embed approaches that support re-unification of children looked after with their families including therapeutic support and intervention.
- Increase our utilisation of Kinship Care arrangements.

- Review our special guardianship support offer to ensure that children can exit care in a timely way that is appropriate and be cared for under special guardianship arrangements where this best meets their needs.
- Work collaboratively with our Regional Adoption Agency partners to ensure that where appropriate and in best interest's, children are considered and progressed for adoption in a timely manner.

3.4.3 To increase our recruitment and retention of mainstream and more Specialist foster carers to support their capacity to meet the needs of the children they care for and enable more children and young people to live locally.

- Promote the concept of Flexible Fostering to recruit more foster carers including mainstream carers, respite carers, enhanced and specialist carers.
- Develop existing mainstream foster carers and recruit additional new carers to an Enhanced Foster Carer programme that can match children with more complex needs to local foster carer households.
- Identify where existing mainstream carers can be upskilled with additional training and support to care for children with more complex needs, utilising the Valuing Care Tool developed with IMPOWER.
- Expand local targeted fostering awareness and recruitment events to increase the number of mainstream enhanced and specialist foster carers.

3.4.4 To review and to reduce our use of out of area children's residential homes and independent fostering agencies, and to increase our inhouse children's residential home provision.

- Develop our internal residential provision including skills and capacity to care for more young people with complex needs and challenging behaviours.
- Complete a formal review of the feasibility for adding further homes to our internal provision, to include exploring creative options such as partnering with other accommodation providers.
- Develop a wider local residential estate with a strategic not-for-profit partner.

- Ensure that the completion of the new Hillview Children's Residential Home progresses smoothly and is ready for occupation end of 2025.
- Conduct an in-depth review of the use of Independent Fostering Agencies with a focus on improving value for money from the use of these providers.

3.4.5 To commission smarter to reduce costs, assure quality and support better matching through building relationships with our market providers and establishing stronger commissioning practices.

- Implement one consistent tool for assessing and understanding need, providing consistent, real-time insights.
- Develop and review annually a 5-year commissioning plan based on predicted placement needs.
- Ensure that there is sufficiency and diversity of providers across all required service areas so that no procurement failures occur which are caused by market shortages or lack of specialist provision.
- Explore more strategic development approaches as an East Midlands region, utilising learning, and insights from sub regional teams (e.g. Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire).
- Review the use of block and spot purchasing of provision for 16+ young people leaving care.
- Engage more fully with our provider markets so that a shared ownership for solution finding can be engendered.
- Increase our Quality Assurance activity including reviewing care packages and staffing ratios of commissioned placements ensuring best value.
- Expand our pilot involving care experienced young people in the quality assurance and commission of children's residential homes.
- Work in collaboration with the newly formed Departmental Project Management Office to support market engagement and to strengthen commissioning practices.

3.4.6 To expand our provision of high quality semi-independent and independent accommodation working with both the voluntary and private sectors as we seek to commission new accommodation and support.

- Review our existing commissioned accommodation ahead of the next tendering and procurement cycle to ensure we are achieving best outcomes and efficiency.
- Develop an improved and more cost-effective supported accommodation offer for care leavers.
- Refine our published Care Leaver Offer to include a specific Children and Young People from Abroad Seeking Safety offer.
- Complete a feasibility study and business case for a pilot supported lodgings scheme.
- Fully embed our Manage Your Own Home course and extend to 16- and 17-year-olds to support young people preparing for adulthood.
- Work with the Housing Department to co-produce a plan for Supported Living and Extra Care to inform the type of physical developments required for this type of housing in Leicester.
- Identify and develop new housing initiatives including Hospital Close, Zip Building to provide supported and semi-independent accommodation.

3.5 Our placement sufficiency strategy continues to focus on support for families through early help and prevention, and to strengthen our edge of care offer to families where children are at risk of entering care.

3.6 The placement sufficiency strategy is underpinned by the principle that children are best cared for by their families, and where they cannot live with their immediate or extended family due to safeguarding concerns or a lack of any family network, and need to remain in care, they are best supported to live in foster care households. In these circumstances we will look to find a family or a home that best meets the child's needs, and offers the love, support, and opportunities they need to thrive.

3.7 Children and young people enter care for a range of reasons, and we seek to ensure that they are only looked after if it is in their best interests and there is no suitable alternative to remaining in care. The reason children enter care and their adverse childhood experiences can influence the type and cost of placement that they require to meet both their immediate and longer-term care

needs. The most frequent cause for children needing to enter care is due to abuse or neglect.

- 3.8 Many children enter care for a relatively short period whilst suitable permanent arrangements can be made to ensure their long-term care needs are met. For some children this will be reunification with their family, or alternative care arrangements such as Kinship Care or Special Guardianship arrangements, and for some children this will involve adoption with a new adoptive family.
- 3.9 For most children looked after and care leavers the most suitable place for them to live is within the local area, minimising any disruption to their education, supporting their health and care needs, whilst ensuring that they maintain good social networks.
- 3.10 The numbers of children and young people looked after in Leicester has remained relatively stable over recent years as a national comparator. A focus on agreeing early permanence arrangements for children who enter care has meant that we have continued to ensure that where appropriate children are able to be reunified with their family, live in longer term kinship care arrangements, or cease to be looked after through being placed for adoption or special guardianship arrangements.
- 3.11 As of 31st March 2024, there were 599 children in care in Leicester, 45% identifying as female and 55% male. This reflects a decrease from the previous year when there were 630 children looked after (31st March 2023). This is in part attributable to the continuing focus on early help and prevention to ensure that families are identified early and supported to enable children to continue living with their families ensuring more intensive support is offered through specialist support for children on the edge of care where there are safeguarding concerns.
- 3.12 Despite the relative stability in the numbers of children looked after over recent years there has been an increase in the complexity of needs of children entering care who have experienced early childhood trauma, and this has had an impact on the level of support and care that some children and young people require. This had meant that the numbers of children requiring more complex care and support together with more costly placements in many instances outside of the local area has increased. Additionally, there has been an increase in the numbers of older adolescents entering care with more complex and challenging behaviours including young people at risk of criminal exploitation.
- 3.13 We have a strong track record of providing high quality care to children looked after with more complex needs in our own children's residential homes. In recent years there has been an increase in the complexity of needs of some of our children and young people including some young people subject to Deprivation of Liberty Orders requiring higher and more costly packages of care.

- 3.14 We remain focussed on minimising children and young people's accommodation moves and seek to avoid any unplanned moves wherever possible due to the disruption this causes to a child's education, health and care needs.

Progress Update

- 3.15 Our existing placement sufficiency strategy has three priority areas: to enhance and grow mainstream foster care, to expand our local children's residential homes and to provide suitable accommodation and housing related support to young people over the age of 16 and to care leavers up to the age of 25.
- 3.16 We have taken a range of steps to strengthen our support to mainstream Foster Carers since 2020 including a review of payments and allowances.
- 3.17 We have successfully introduced a higher level of accreditation for our foster carers (Enhanced Foster Carers). This recognises the skills of carers who can care for children with more complex needs and rewards them at a higher rate than a mainstream foster carer enabling more children to remain living locally.
- 3.18 We have launched a new Fostering Service web site with improved enquiry submission and tracking functionality and launched a revised Fostering Marketing & Communications Strategy.
- 3.19 We have implemented a capital investment fund to support adaptations to foster carers properties that has allowed more children to continue to live in sibling groups and will provide more flexible accommodation provision for foster carers to meet future needs.
- 3.20 We commissioned IMPOWER, the UK's largest independent consultancy focusing on change and transformation programmes for public service organisations in late 2023 to review our looked after child profile and placement costs and our local offer to our foster carers. This identified that the majority of our looked after children are appropriately matched and that our mainstream foster carers are looking after some of our most complex young people at a lower cost than Independent Fostering Agencies or external residential homes.
- 3.21 The intensive review of our services completed by IMPOWER has given us clear insights into where we need to focus our energies for the next five years. Using our own data, national insights, and census data, along with their Valuing Care tool, this has provided the basis for our plans for addressing the challenges we are facing.
- 3.22 A minority of children looked after are unable to live locally due to concerns about their safety, risk of exploitation, or complex health and social care needs.

For these children and young people, we will need to continue to commission specialist support and accommodation either with Independent Fostering Agencies or external children's residential homes. We will build on work with IMPOWER using the Valuing Care Tool to identify where any children with complex needs placed out of the area can be matched to local foster carers.

- 3.23 Our strategy will need to ensure that Leicester remains an attractive authority for newly recruited foster carers whilst addressing the national shortage of foster carers and adopters for children and external pressures on recruitment such as the cost-of-living crisis.
- 3.24 The government has recognised the need to increase the provision of accommodation for children looked after and to address the excessive profiteering from the private sector which has been characterised by a significant increase in accommodation fees from some providers over recent years. The Competition & Markets Authority have reported in just six years costs for some residential care, have increased by 105%.
- 3.25 Since our last Placement Strategy we have opened two new children's homes, adding capacity for 7 more Children Looked After to live locally. A third new children's home is due to open in Autumn 2025 that will provide a further 6 spaces, including training flats for young people leaving care. This new provision has been joint funded by the council and central government following successful competitive bidding for capital funding from the DfE.
- 3.26 In order to meet the requirement to provide sufficiency of accommodation for children looked after and care leavers over the next five years we will need to continue to expand our provision of mainstream and specialist foster carers together with expansion of supported accommodation for care leavers.
- 3.27 We will continue to work to ensure that children and young people looked after are only placed in accommodation that is regulated and registered with Ofsted, and where this is not possible, we will work with Ofsted and the provider to support registration whilst ensuring that any children looked after are appropriately safeguarded and supported.
- 3.28 Our strategy will need to ensure that we are able to continue to support children and young people from abroad seeking safety, who come to Leicester either in a planned way through the National Transfer Scheme or are spontaneous arrivals.
- 3.29 Our placement sufficiency strategy has been developed in partnership with our children looked after and young people and the new strategy will continue to include contributions from care experienced consultants and our Children in Care Council.

- 3.30 Whilst we have a good retention rate for foster carers who report high levels of satisfaction with the support that they receive from the councils fostering service, we have an aging profile of foster carers which means that we will need to recruit additional new foster carers above and beyond previous levels if we are to continue to maintain the numbers of children living locally in foster carer households.
- 3.31 The placement sufficiency strategy is underpinned by our Corporate Parenting Strategy which sets out our strategic priorities for our children and young people including our commitment to *'A Place to Live' that meets needs*.
- 3.32 Our placement sufficiency strategy will need to remain integrated across the council to ensure that vulnerable children and young people who are looked after locally can continue to have their education and wellbeing needs met together with any ongoing housing and adult social care needs as they transition into adulthood.
- 3.33 We will continue to work with our partners in the NHS to ensure that children and young people with more complex physical and mental health needs can continue to be supported to live locally, and where this is not possible appropriate packages of integrated care are commissioned for children who live outside the area. This will include working with the Integrated Commissioning Board to identify any children with more complex health needs who can be supported through Continuing Care.
- 3.34 Our commissioning strategy will need to ensure that we have a greater understanding of care leavers housing and support needs up to and beyond the age of 25.
- 3.35 In order to meet our duty for sufficiency and to ensure that more children and young people who enter care can be matched to local foster carer households that best meet their needs we will need to recruit additional foster carers representative of all local communities.
- 3.36 We have developed a range of participation and co-production groups, with a Children in Care Council (from 9yrs) and Care Experienced consultants from 15yrs. Children and young people's voices and experiences have been a key part of corporate parenting meetings and processes.
- 3.37 Young people attend Scrutiny Committee meetings and have shared their experiences of seeking asylum and poverty, alongside their proposals for positive change and support. These young people are regularly asked to consult on both Council developments, service developments and local developments. Their views are sought, and influence has been seen in their presentations to Scrutiny Committee and their innovative podcasts sharing their experiences to shape services.

- 3.38 During the summer of 2024, we captured the views from a broad range of our Children Looked After and Care Leavers. This was done via an online, confidential survey (Leicester Asks) with support readily available for any young people that required it. The questions for the survey were co-produced with children in care and these reflected the themes that they felt were most important, and the findings will inform our new placement sufficiency strategy.
- 3.39 This strategy is overseen by the Strategic Director for Social Care and Education, supported by the Director for Children's Social Work and Early Help and Head of Corporate Parenting, who are accountable for ensuring progress against the stated aims.
- 3.40 Progress will be monitored through the Social Care and Education Department and corporate governance structures, including the Placement Sufficiency Board and the Education, Health, and Care Board, and updated annually to SCE Scrutiny.
- 3.41 As some actions rely on the engagement of partners the strategy is also of importance to the Integrated Systems of Care Group and Joint Integrated Commissioning Board. There are a range of working groups and forums that will support the delivery of actions and where barriers and issues can be taken for partnership support.

4. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

4.1 Financial Implications

- 4.1.1 The proposed strategic priorities for 2025/30 contained within this report will contribute towards controlling costs for the care of children. Progress made against the strategic priorities will be included within the regular budget monitoring reports for each financial year.

Mohammed Irfan

Head of Finance, Social Care, Education and Public Health

11 December 2024

4.2 Legal Implications

- 4.2.1 Section 22G of the Children's Act 1989: Children Act 1989 sets out requirements for local authorities to take strategic action in respect of those children they look after, so far as is reasonably practicable, to ensure that there is sufficient accommodation for them that meets their needs and is within their local authority area.

- 4.2.2 Section 22G of the Children's Act 1989: Children Act 1989 sets out requirements for local authorities to take strategic action in respect of those children they look after, so far as is reasonably practicable, to ensure that there is sufficient accommodation for them that meets their needs and is within their local authority area. It further requires local authorities to have regard to the benefit of having both a number of providers in their area and a range of accommodation capable of meeting different needs.
- 4.2.3 The updated Placement Sufficiency Strategy has a wide range of action which together will ensure that the authority is able to comply with this statutory duty including meeting the needs of the increasing number of children and young people with complex needs. A failure to meet this duty could result in judicial review of the authority particular in litigated cases which are under the scrutiny of CAFCASS and the court.

Susan Holmes

Head of Law for Social Care & Safeguarding

09.12.24

4.3 Equalities Implications

- 4.3.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which means that, in carrying out their functions, they have a statutory duty to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act, to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.
- 4.3.2 Due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty should be paid before and at the time a decision is taken, in such a way that it can influence the final decision.
- 4.3.3 Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 4.3.4 The report is seeking approval for the proposed strategic priorities for 2025/30 as well as providing an update on the progress made delivering the Placement Sufficiency strategy from 2020/24. There are six proposed strategic priorities for 2025/30 which cover a wide range of areas, and these will impact child looked after and care leavers who will be from across a range of protected characteristics by ensuring there is sufficient accommodation that meets their needs locally.
- 4.3.5 Going forward, equality considerations need to continue to be embedded throughout the Placement Sufficiency Strategy 2025/30. Equality impact assessments should, therefore, be undertaken on any element of the Placement Sufficiency Strategic Aims – What We Will Do, which will affect child looked after

and care leavers. Working strategically with other council services to co-plan and co-produce services, links to relevant strategies, i.e. Corporate Parenting Strategy, working regionally and with the provider market will help to ensure a joined-up approach is taken, which will benefit young people.

- 4.3.6 It is important to ensure that any consultation/engagement/communication is meaningful and accessible and targeted to meet the needs of relevant stakeholders from across all protected characteristics.
- 4.3.7 In addition, as changes are implemented, it will be important to monitor for any unexpected disproportionate negative impacts or where we are unsure of the impact, in order that they can be addressed swiftly and effectively. This will be beneficial in ensuring that there are no barriers to accessing support arising from any particular protected characteristic/s.

Sukhi Biring

Equalities Officer 0116 454 4175

12.12.2024.

4.4 Climate Emergency Implications

- 4.4.1 The council's provision of services and its use of buildings are a significant source of carbon emissions, and a key area to tackle following the council's declaration of a climate emergency and ambition to achieve net zero carbon emissions.
- 4.4.2 Where new children's home provision is developed or existing buildings refurbished, opportunities to reduce the energy use and carbon emissions of the buildings should be identified and implemented wherever possible. As relevant to the projects carried out, this should include the installation of measures such as high levels of insulation, low carbon heating and renewable energy systems. These measures would also reduce energy costs and could increase comfort levels for occupants.
- 4.4.3 As service provision generally contributes to the council's carbon footprint, any impacts could be considered as part of any changes made to commissioning and delivery, for example through encouraging the use of sustainable travel options, using buildings and materials efficiently and following the council's sustainable procurement guidance, as appropriate and relevant to the options selected.

Aidan Davis, Sustainability Officer, Ext 37 2284

11 December 2024

4.5 Other Implications

None

5. Background information and other papers:

Leicester Asks Survey 2024

6. Summary of appendices:

None

Placement Sufficiency Strategy

Supporting Data

2025 to 2030

Placement Sufficiency

58 The council has a legal duty under Section 22G of the Children Act 1989 to ensure that there is sufficient accommodation for children looked after that meets their needs, and that as far as is reasonably practicable is within the local authority area.

Placement Sufficiency Strategic Aims

- To invest and strengthen our edge of care offer to support children to continue living with their families
- To support stability for our children and young people, by providing timely options to achieve permanence
- To increase our recruitment and retention of mainstream and more specialist foster carers
- To reduce our use of out of area children's homes and IFA's and increase our inhouse residential homes
- To commission smarter to reduce costs, assure quality establishing stronger commissioning practices
- To expand our provision of high quality semi-independent and independent accommodation working

Full details of our plans are shown in the Placement Sufficiency Strategic Delivery Plan, 2025 to 2030.

Children Looked After Population Needs Analysis

Number of Children Looked After has remained relatively stable

597 Children Looked After and 305 Care Leavers (18-21) March 2025

Number of Children Looked After per 10,000 is below the national average

Majority of children looked after live locally in the City or 20 mile radius

Average length of time that children remain looked after 2024 – 2025 is 31 months

Ethnicity of children looked after remains relatively stable

Ratio of Children from Abroad Seeking Safety increased but below national average

Gender ratio of male children looked after has increased slightly (CASS Impact)

Number of children with EHCP has increased

What Our Young People Tell Us – Leicester Asks Survey

Total completing the survey



34%

Live with Foster Carers

28%

Live in a Residential Home

22%
Other

11%

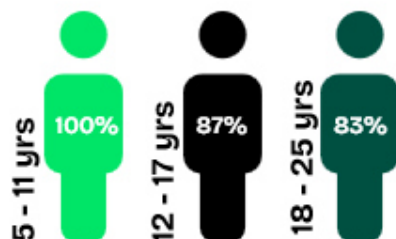
Live with Family or Friends

4%

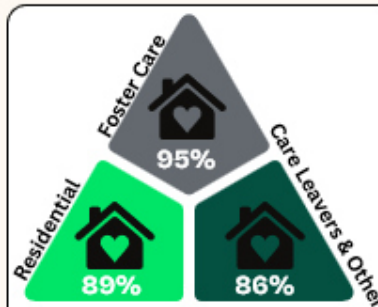
Prefer not to Say



Like where they are living based on:



Their age



Where they live



Like their bedroom

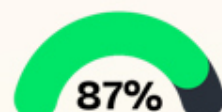
Differences between age groups



5 - 7yrs



8 - 11yrs




12 - 17yrs




My support worker is very kind and listens to me and has helped me a lot


Trust the process - it'll work out in the end. Don't be afraid to make changes for yourself.


 The majority have carers that notice how they feel

92.5%

 The majority of responders have been in long-term care of 3+ years.

71%

 The majority like where they live.

 The majority have their bedroom how they like

 The majority trust their carers

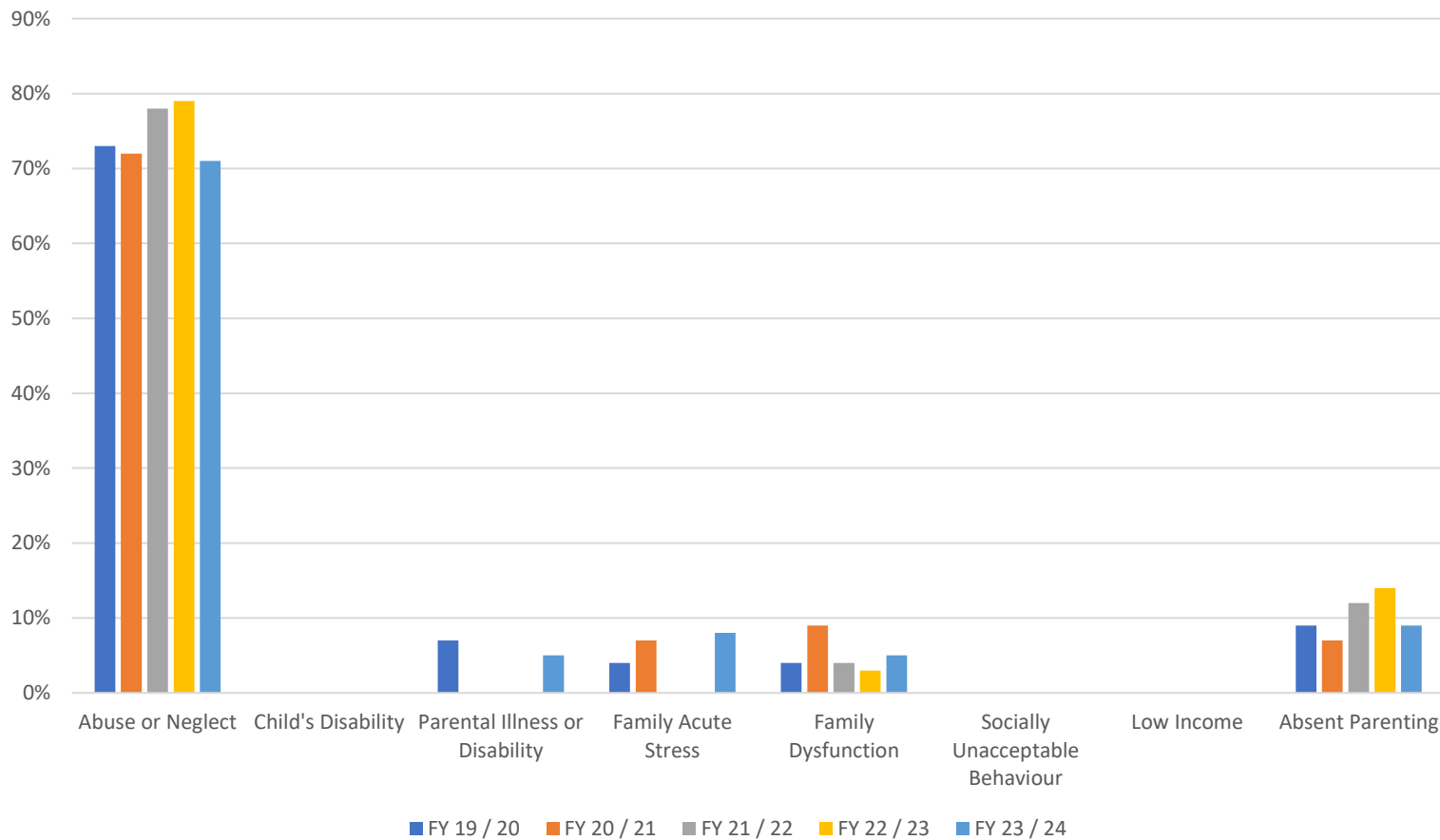
 The majority feel safe.

95%



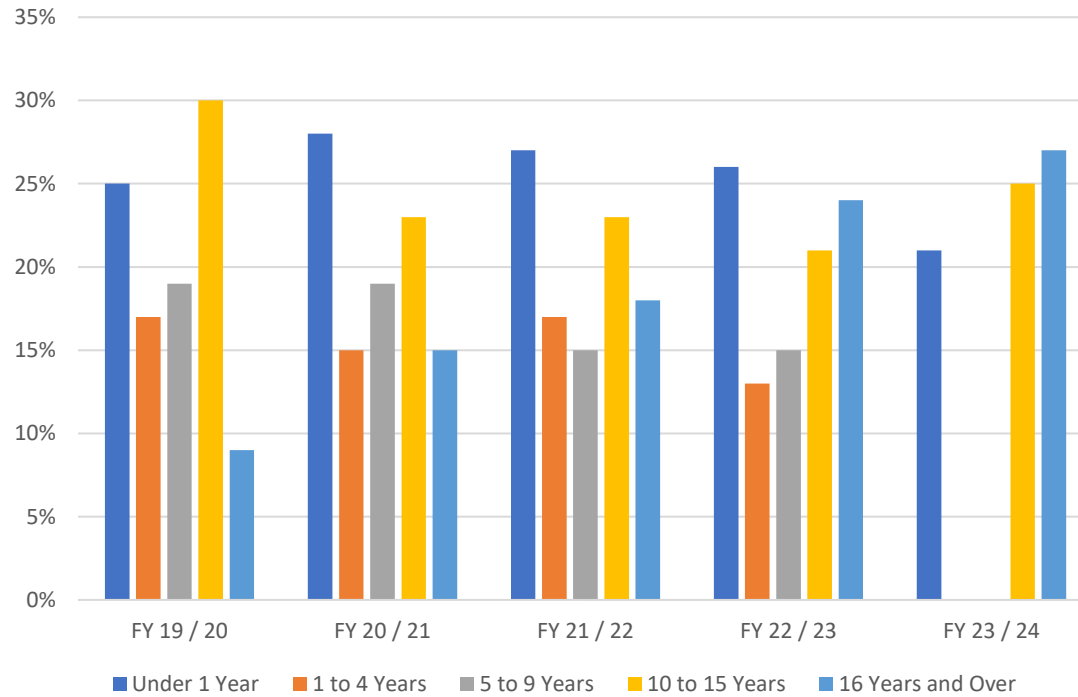
Children Looked After Population Needs Analysis

Reasons Children become Looked After



Children Looked After Population Needs Analysis

Entrants to care by Age



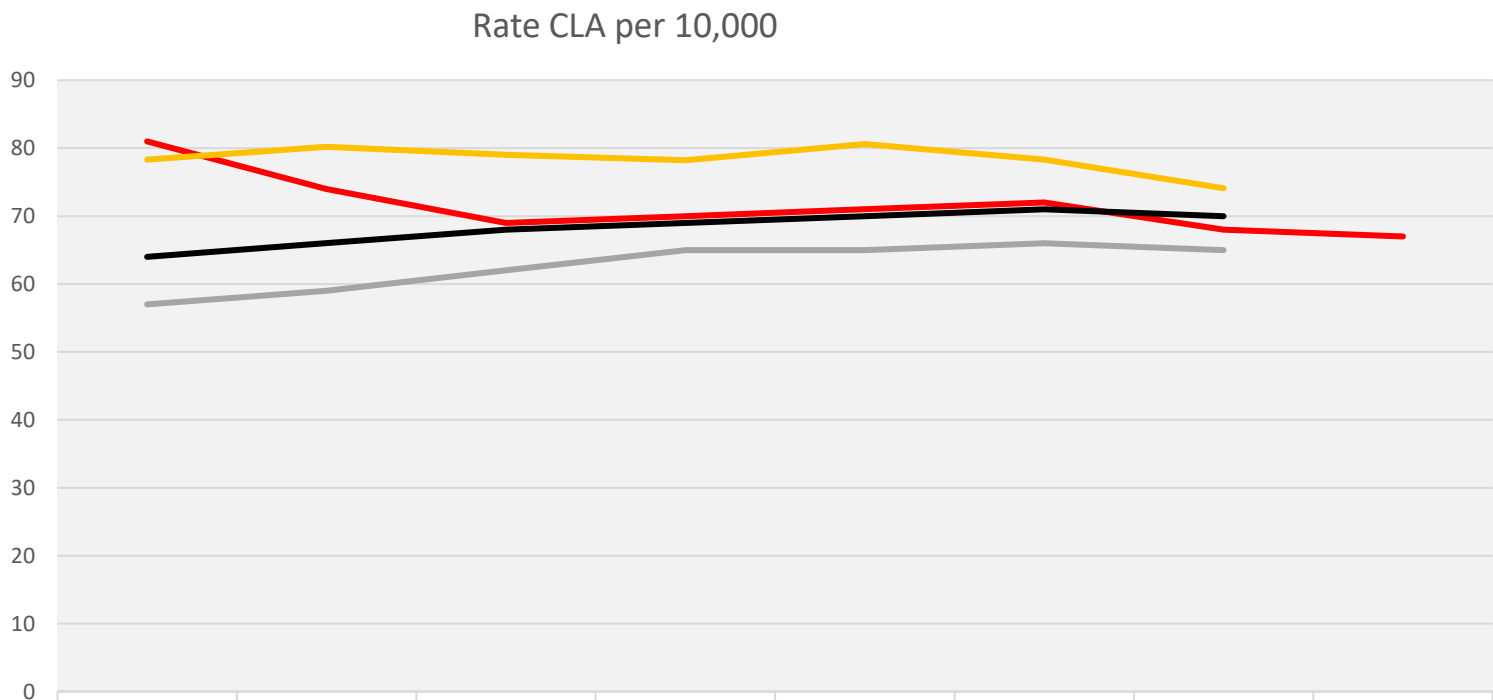
Children Looked After Population Needs Analysis

Where our children looked after live



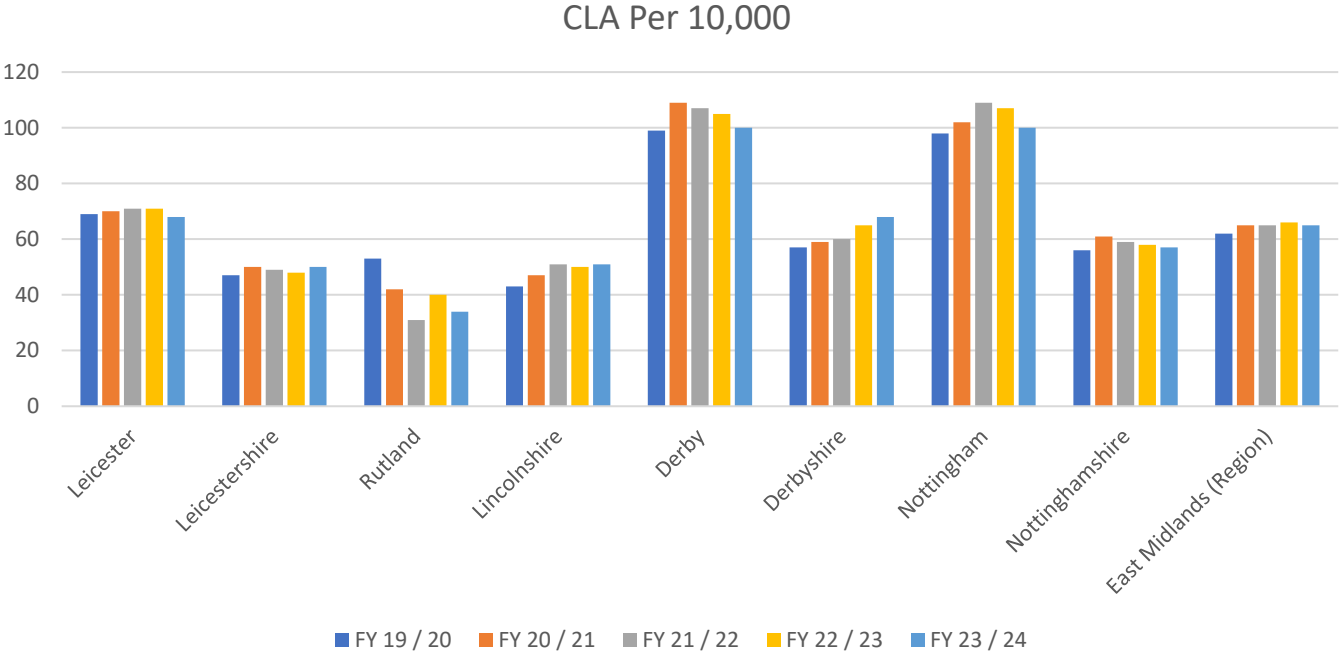
Children Looked After Population Needs Analysis

Rate of children looked after per 10,000 is below national average



	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	Feb 2025
Leicester	81	74	69	70	71	72	68	67
England	64	66	68	69	70	71	70	
East Midlands	57	59	62	65	65	66	65	
Statistical Neighbours	78.3	80.2	79	78.2	80.6	78.3	74.1	

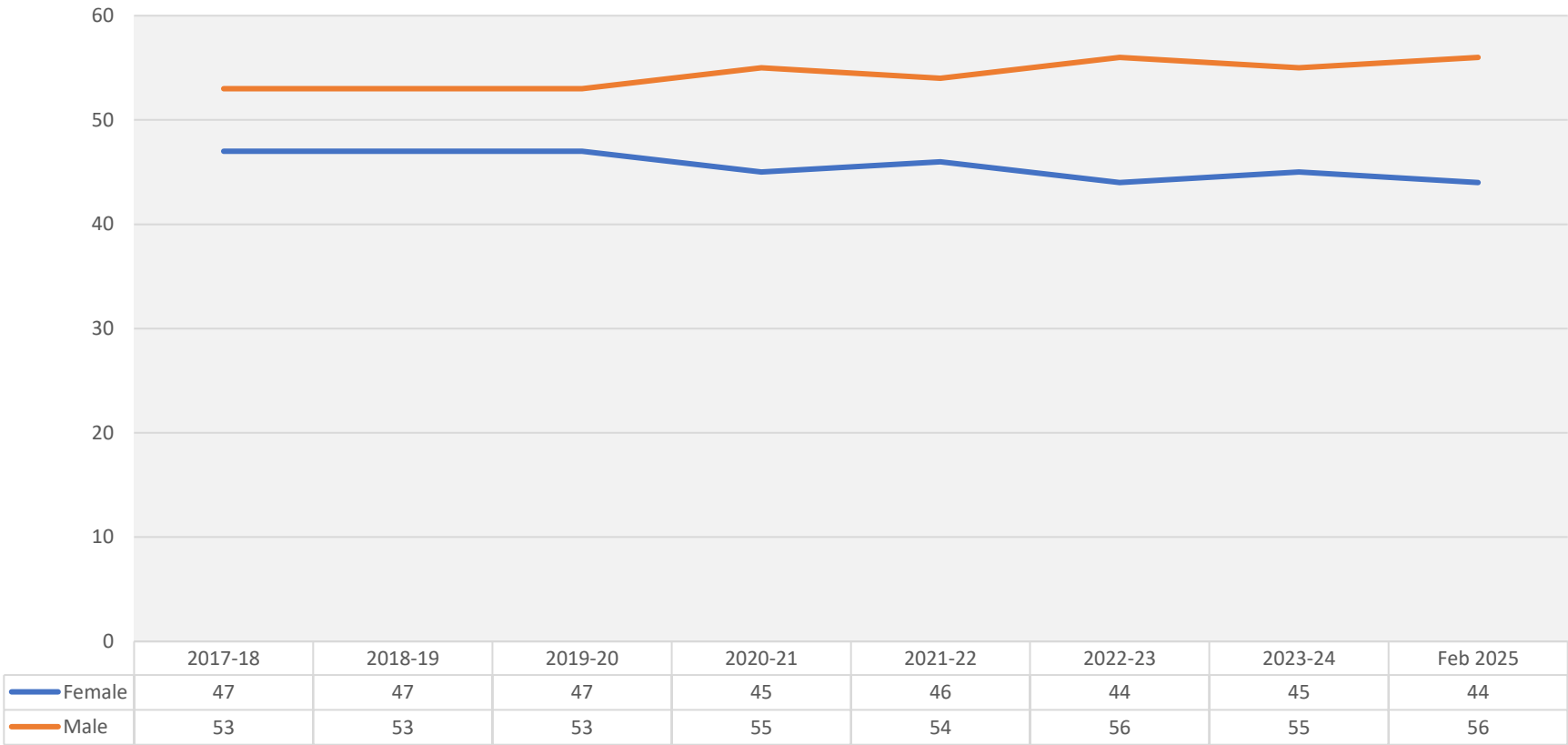
Numbers of Children Looked After per 10,000 Lower than East Midlands Unitary Averages



Children Looked After Population Needs Analysis
Ratio of male children has increased slightly
(children from abroad seeking safety)

68

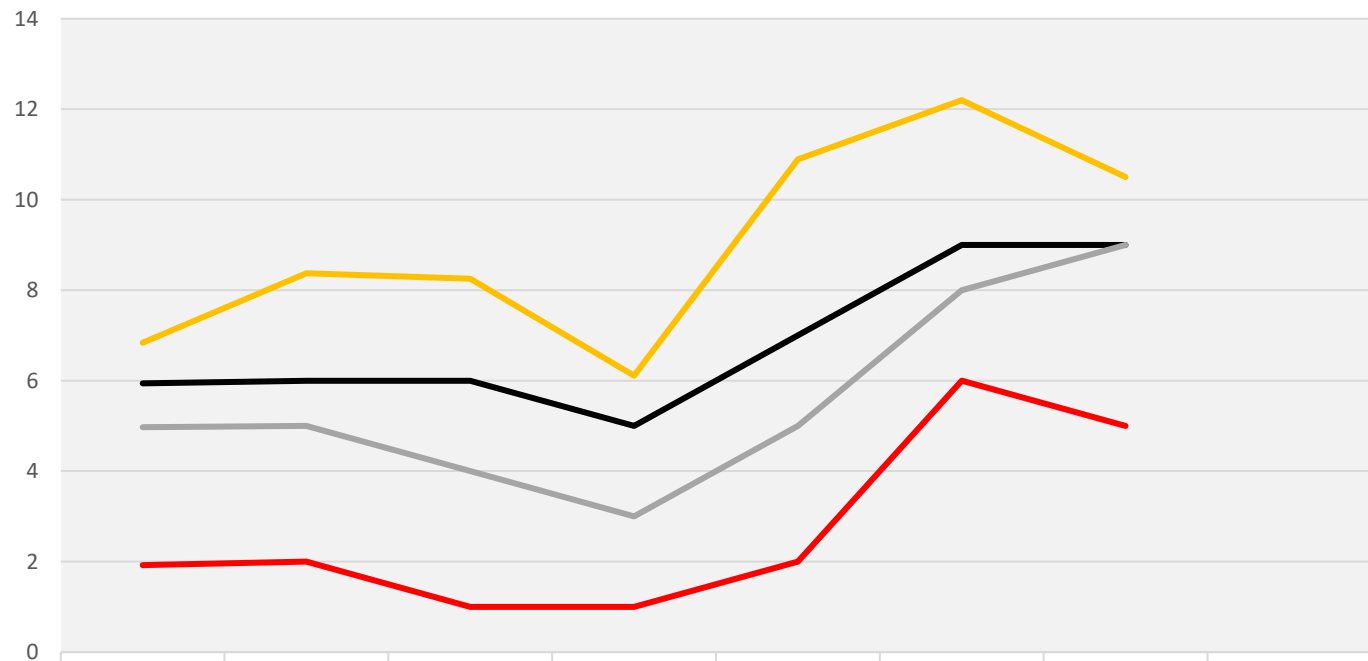
Leicester CLA by Gender



Children Looked After Population Needs Analysis

Ratio of Children from Abroad Seeking Safety has increased but remains below comparators

% CLA being Children from Abroad Seeking Safety

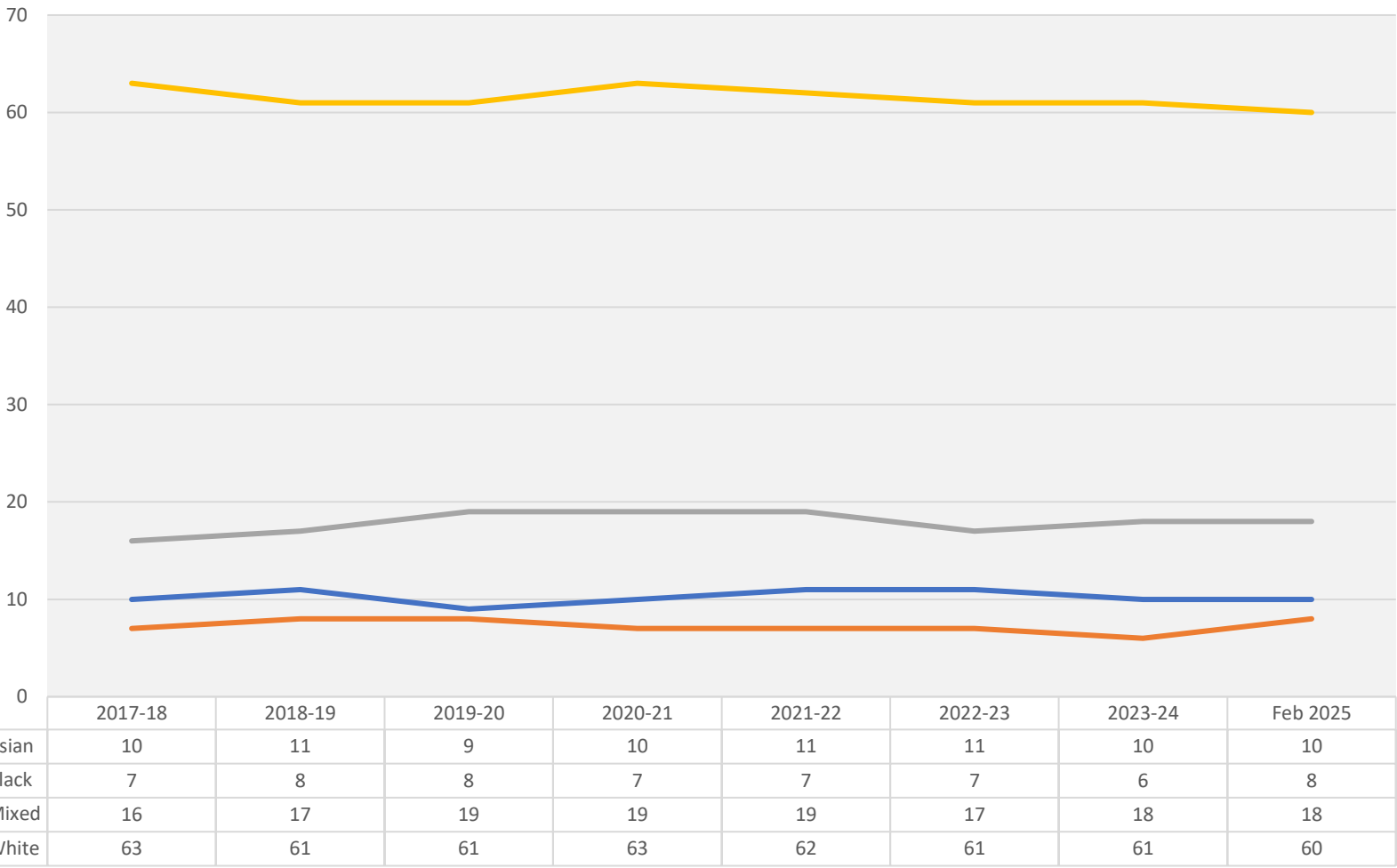


	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	Feb 2025
Leicester	1.9	2.0	1.0	1.0	2.0	6.0	5.0	
England	5.9	6.0	6.0	5.0	7.0	9.0	9.0	
East Midlands	5.0	5.0	4.0	3.0	5.0	8.0	9.0	
Statistical Neighbours	6.8	8.4	8.3	6.1	10.9	12.2	10.5	

Children Looked After Population Needs Analysis

Ethnicity of population group largely stable

70



Children Looked After Needs Analysis - Residential Care

Ratio of Leicester children living in residential care is below the national average

Number of our children placed in internal & external residential care has increased

Number of our children placed in internal residential care is above national average

71 Number of children placed in specialist residential care has increased

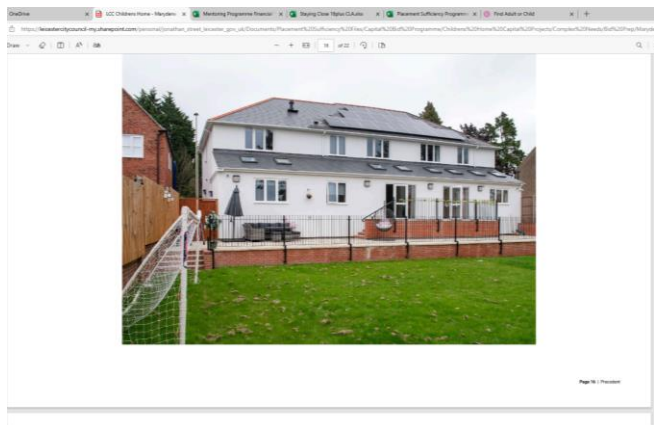
Average cost of residential placement has increased though below national average

Average cost of an internal residential placement is £4627 per week

Average cost of an external residential placement is £5414 per week

Average cost of specialist residential placement has increased

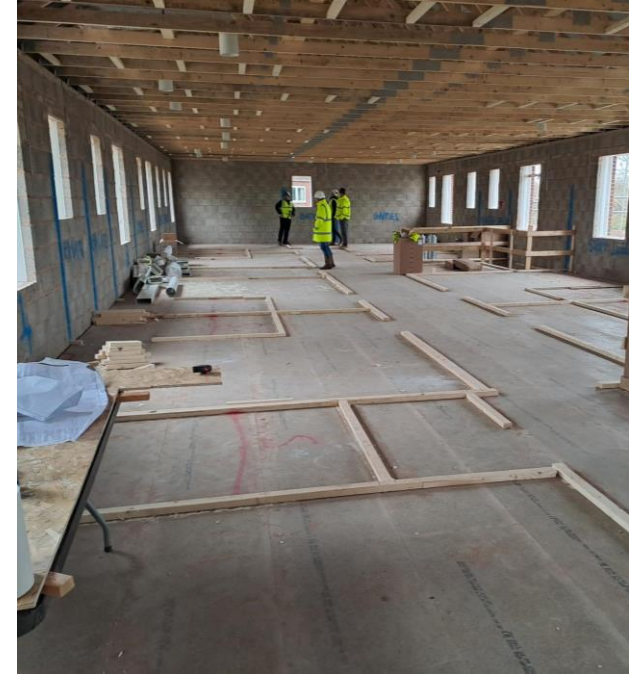
Number of children placed in unregistered placements is lower than average



Holly House



Hillview – & Construction In Progress



Children Looked After Needs Analysis - Fostering

Most of our Children Looked After Live in Foster Care Households

Ratio of Leicester children living in Foster Care is above the national average

Majority of our Children in Foster Care are looked after by our own internal carers

Number of our children placed with internal carers is above average

74 Average cost of internal foster care household placement £340 per week

A smaller number of children cared for by Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs)

Number of children living in Independent Fostering Agencies has increased

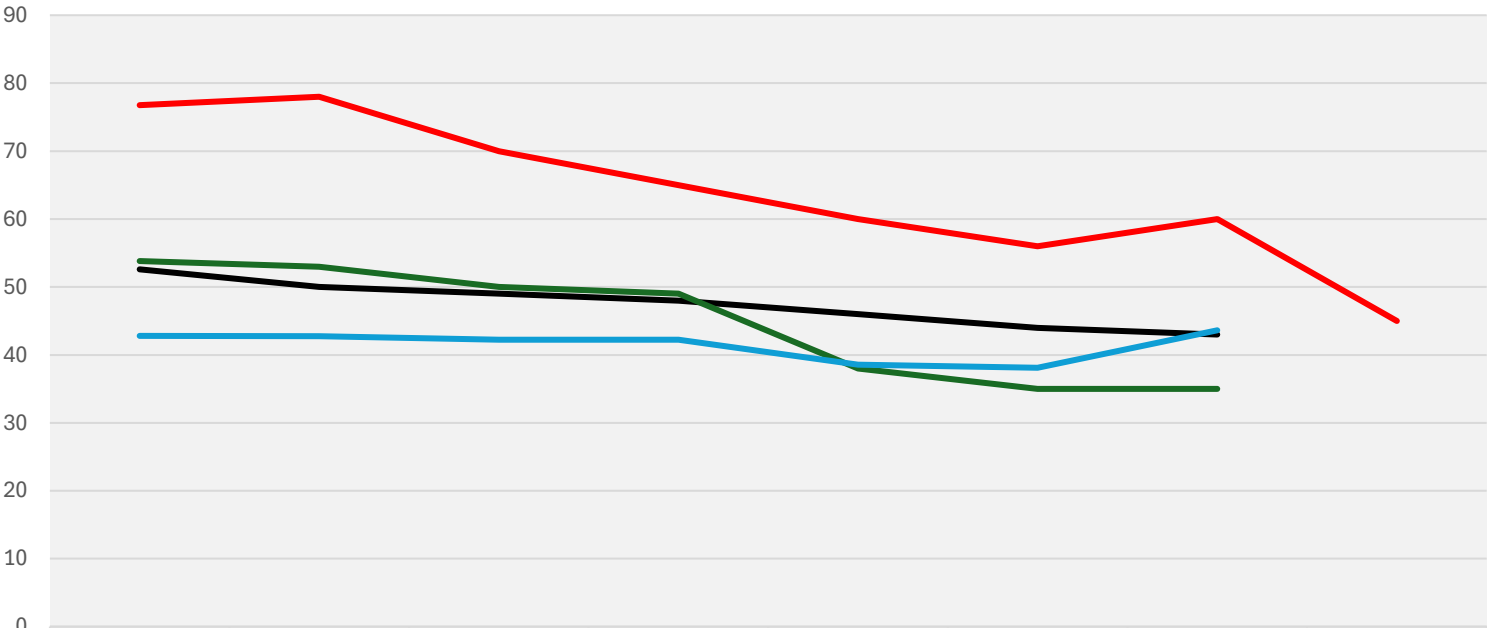
Number of children placed with IFA is still below the national average

Average cost of Independent Fostering Agency Placement £981 per week

Children Looked After Population Needs Analysis

Majority of children in foster care looked after by our own internal carers is reducing but remains above the average

% CLA placed with internal carers

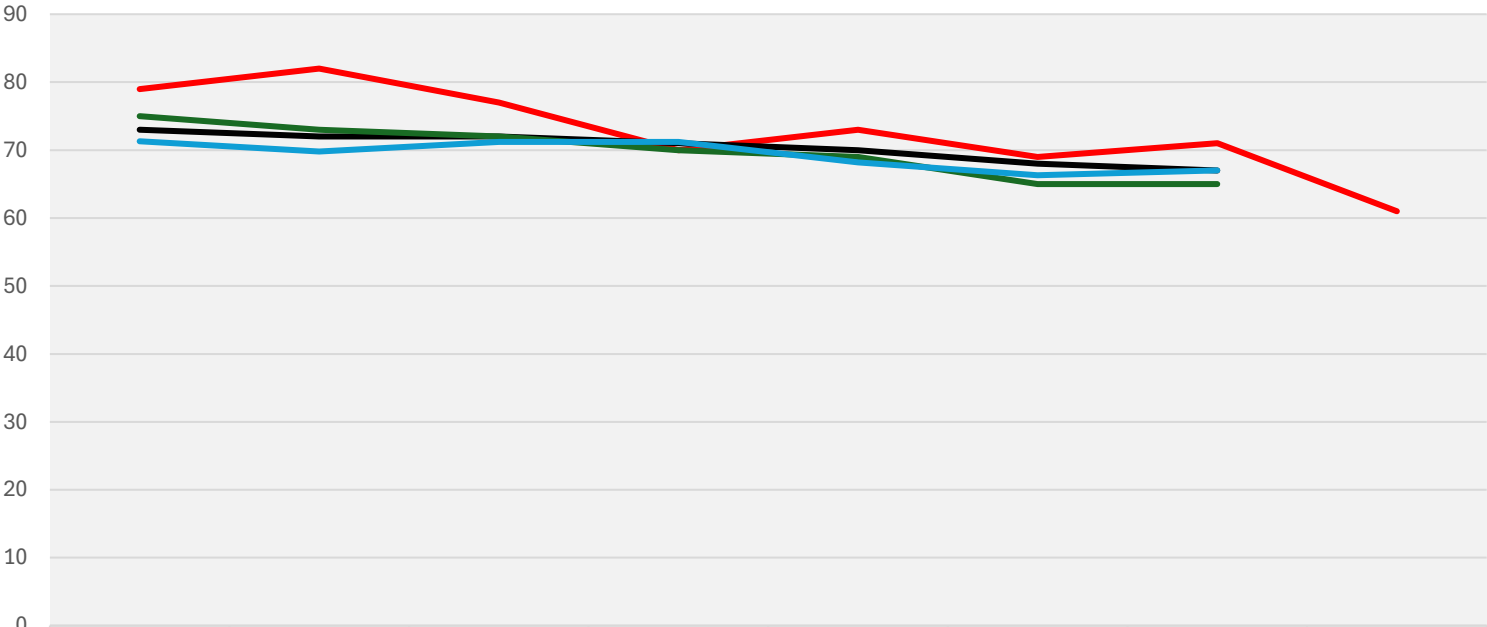


	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	Feb 2025
Leicester	77	78	70	65	60	56	60	45
England	53	50	49	48	46	44	43	
East Midlands	54	53	50	49	38	35	35	
Statistical Neighbours	43	43	42	42	39	38	44	

Children Looked After Population Needs Analysis

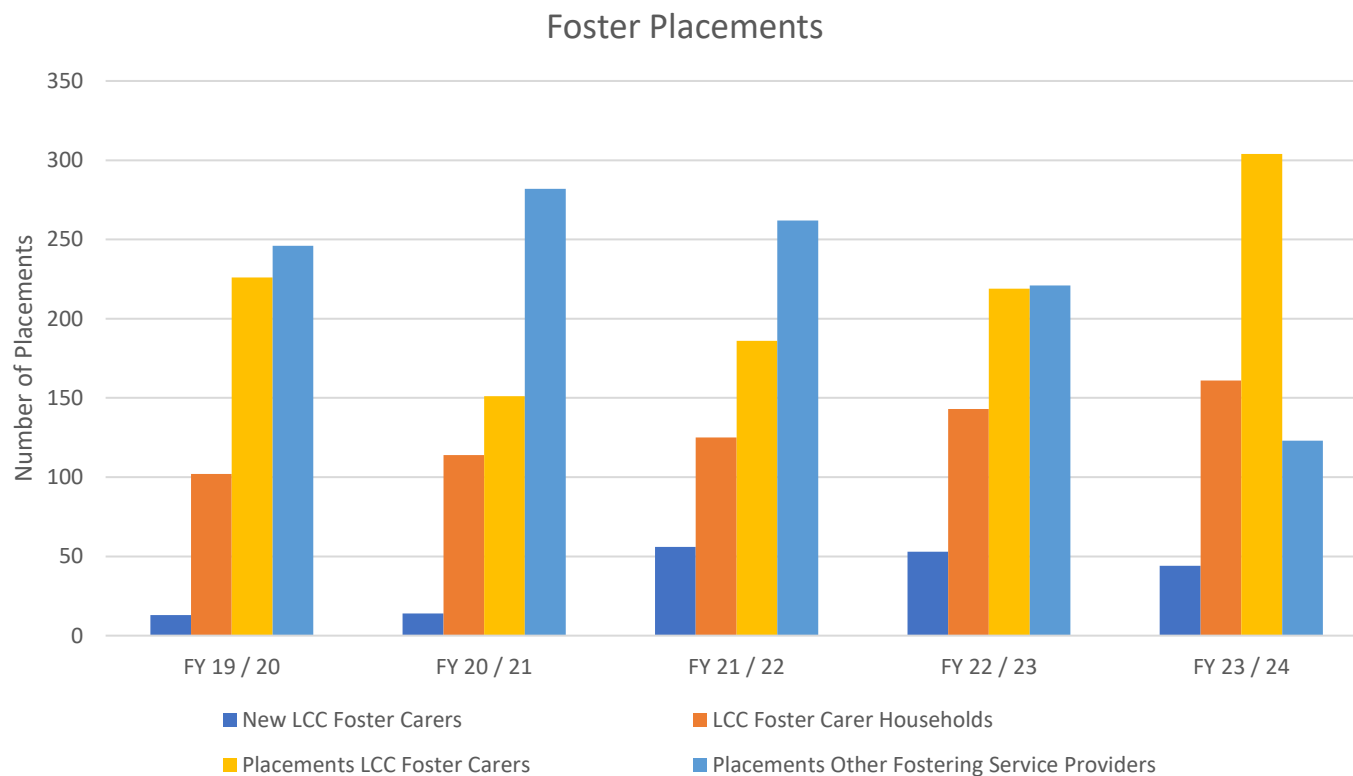
Ratio of children living in foster care is down though above national average

% CLA placed in Foster Placements



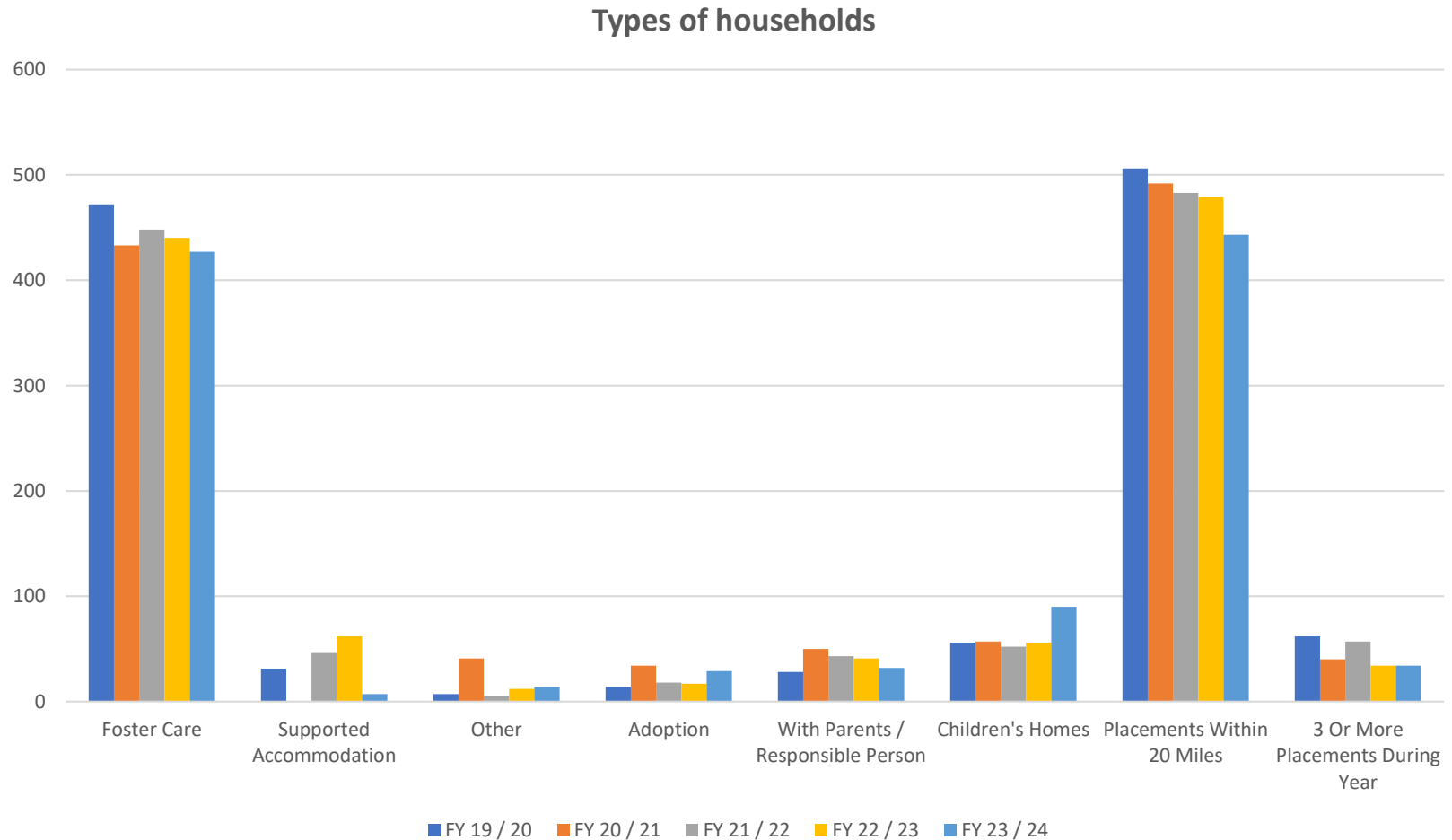
	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	Feb 2025
Leicester	79	82	77	70	73	69	71	61
England	73	72	72	71	70	68	67	
East Midlands	75	73	72	70	69	65	65	
Statistical Neighbours	71.3	69.8	71.2	71.2	68.2	66.3	67	

Reducing our use of Independent Fostering Agencies



Enabling children to live locally in family households

78



Recruitment & Retention of Foster Carers

	FOSTER CARE				
	FY 19 / 20	FY 20 / 21	FY 21 / 22	FY 22 / 23	FY 23 / 24
LCC Foster Carers at Start of Year	154	167	229	214	202
New LCC Foster Carers	13	14	56	53	44
LCC Foster Carers at End of Year	167	186	244	226	209
LCC Foster Care Households	102	114	125	143	161
Average Age of Foster Carers	56.5	55.6	54.9	53.8	53.1
Foster Placements	472	433	448	440	427
Foster Placements, LCC Carers	226	151	186	219	304
Foster Placements, Other Providers	246	282	262	221	123

Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission (CYPE)
Work Programme 2024 – 2025

Meeting Date	Item	Recommendations / Actions	Progress
19 June 2024	Questions, Representations and Statements of case.	Set up session to help members understand the issues surrounding community asset transfer.	
	Introduction to CYPE Scrutiny Commission including new Directors.	Briefing to be given on finance and resources in CYPE.	To be shared in a later paper with scrutiny
		Staff turnover figures to be provided.	To be shared in a later paper with scrutiny
		Updated briefing on CYPE to come to Commission once more is known after General Election - to include information on finance and resource and the workforce.	To be shared in a later paper with scrutiny
	Terms of Reference		
	Education Performance Report.	Influence on deprivation on performance to be investigated, particularly with regard to white children and those eligible for free school meals.	
		Regional director from DfE to be invited to the Commission to inform on academy schools in the area.	
		Monitor the emergence of a national plan.	No national plan announced to date
		Report to come to the Commission on Children's Centres and Children's Services.	
	Children Seeking Safety	Commission to be kept informed of developments regarding Children Seeking Safety.	
	Post-16 SEND Home-to-School Travel - Update	Consultation to be shared with Commission in advance. (via email rather than at a meeting due to schedule)	Will be shared when available.

1Click here to enter text.

Meeting Date	Item	Recommendations / Actions	Progress
20 August 2024	Family Hubs and Children's Centres	Mapping for Change to be added as an item to the Work Plan. To come to the Commission once the final report was reviewed.	
	Use of Capital Programme in Schools	Added value to be included in future reports.	
	Youth Justice Plan Refresh 2024/25	Plan to be sent to Schools. Engagement Strategy to be shared with Councillors, and offer made to Councillors to attend meetings on participation of young people in the service.	
	Adventure Playgrounds Update	Update report on the situation regarding Adventure Playgrounds to come to the Commission after September. Cllr Russell and Chair and Vice-Chair to discuss possible engagement with play associations to get progress updates.	

Meeting Date	Item	Recommendations / Actions	Progress
29 October 2024	DSG high-needs block recovery plan	<p>Information to be provided on how long people are having to wait for EHCPs and suitable placements.</p> <p>Report to be brought on sufficiency in Mainstream and Special Schools.</p> <p>Case study to be brought to the Commission.</p> <p>Report on tribunals to be brought to commission, including the number of cases, and costs, including costs of external consultants in tribunals to be ascertained.</p>	Shared with Members.
	Adventure Playground Update		
	Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report	Terms of Reference of the task and finish group to develop learning and training around the role of immigration status, culture, faith, and parenting in safeguarding children to be circulated to members.	
	Workload and Resources	Benchmarking information to be shared with Members	

Meeting Date	Item	Recommendations / Actions	Progress
14 January 2025	Update on Youth Summit	<p>To be considered as a regular item to ensure the conversation continues.</p> <p>Cultural Dimension to be added to look at how Young People from overseas interact and how they settle in the UK/Leicester.</p> <p>Consideration be given to including Looked After Children and Children Seeking Safety.</p> <p>Consideration to be given to how young people want to be spoken to and receive information.</p> <p>Members to be kept informed of future summits.</p>	
	Update on Children from Abroad Seeking Safety	<p>Proportions of 18+ and U18s to be included in next report.</p> <p>More information on the support the Education Psychology service provides in relation to trauma experienced by CSS, other than the 'Journeys' project to be provided. Health colleagues to be contacted on this.</p> <p>To be reported on every 6 months.</p>	
	Update from Impower	<p>Report to be brought on the Functioning Family Therapy pilot programme, looking at its activity and successes, including a cover report explaining terminology. To come to Commission quarterly or 6-monthly.</p>	

Meeting Date	Item	Recommendations / Actions	Progress
	<p>Children's Services: Cost Mitigation Programme Overview</p> <p>Draft General Revenue Budget and Draft Capital Programme 2025/26</p>	<p>Information on independent visitors to be sent to members.</p> <p>Commission to follow social work staffing and training.</p> <p>Commission to be informed on how work with families in localities will be carried out and what the change will look like and how it will be delivered locally. A project plan for delivery will be needed.</p> <p>Request regarding breaking down budget into service areas to be considered.</p> <p>Information to be provided on whether local safety schemes include road safety schemes around schools.</p>	
25 February 2025	<p>LADO Annual Report</p> <p>Ofsted Report (Children's Social Care)</p> <p>Improvement Plan</p> <p>Post-16 SEND Home-to-School transport</p>		

Meeting Date	Item	Recommendations / Actions	Progress
8 April 2025	<p>Adventure playgrounds – final update</p> <p>High Needs Block – Impact of workstreams</p> <p>Functioning Family therapies</p> <p>HNB Tribunal Report</p> <p>HNB Case Study</p> <p>HNB Sufficiency in Mainstream and Special Schools</p> <p>Sufficiency Strategy</p>	<p>To include info on activities and successes, and a cover report explaining terminology. To come quarterly or 6-monthly.</p> <p>To include information on the number of cases, and costs, including costs of external consultants.</p> <p>May need to be exempt or redacted if it includes personal information.</p> <p>To include provision of Care Packages/Residential Accommodation for CLA – Council provision and the private sector.</p>	

Forward Plan Items (suggested)

Topic	Detail	Proposed Date
Children from Abroad Seeking Safety	6-monthly report.	
Academies – Performance Report		
Needs Assessment in Relation to Families in the City		

Children not in state-maintained schools e.g.: Academies, Independent, Faith schools		
Multi-Academy Trusts - Overview		
Update from local DfE Officer		
Fostering Annual Report	To include costs relating to Customer Relationship management tool, the Ofsted thematic report, information on family finding events and more detail on advertising techniques for recruitment.	
Fostering Community Champions update	Deferred from 26 March 2024	
Corporate Parenting Update	Annual report.	
Fostering Service – Marketing Strategy		
SEN support and funding		
Pupil Place Planning (Primary and Secondary)		
Early Years Childcare Sufficiency Report		
Youth Services - overview		
Children in Care Council/Care Leavers		
School Holiday Activity and Food Provision		
Education Govt reports e.g.: white paper / green paper		
Ofsted Inspection reports		
Children's Social Care – Recruitment Issues		
Mental Health impacts on children	Likely to be examined jointly with other commissions	
Informal Scrutiny on DSG High Needs Block	To commence following the full report to the Commission.	
Leicester Children's Services – Self Evaluation		

Covid impact and response to early childhood development		
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